

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

Together with Written Submissions

**Ordered by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee
to be printed 17 February 2015**

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**THE REPORT REMAINS EMBARGOED UNTIL
COMMENCEMENT OF THE DEBATE IN PLENARY.**

Membership and Powers

Powers

The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Standing Order 59 which states:

- “(1) There shall be a standing committee of the Assembly to be known as the Assembly and Executive Review Committee.
- (2) The committee may
 - (a) exercise the power in section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
 - (b) report from time to time to the Assembly and the Executive Committee.
- (3) The committee shall consider
 - (a) such matters relating to the operation of the provisions of Parts 3 and 4 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 as enable it to make the report referred to in section 29A(3) of that Act; and
 - (b) such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive Committee as may be referred to it by the Assembly.”

Membership

The Committee has eleven members including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson with a quorum of five. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
 Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Alex Attwood¹
 Robin Swann¹¹
 Paula Bradley²
 Gregory Campbell
 Trevor Lunn³
 Raymond McCartney
 Seán Rogers^{4, 5, 6}
 Alastair Ross^{7, 8}
 Caitríona Ruane^{9, 10}

- 1 With effect from 4 September 2013 Mr Conall McDevitt resigned as a Member; with effect from 7 October 2013 Mr Alex Attwood replaced Mr Conall McDevitt
- 2 With effect from 3 February 2014 Ms Paula Bradley replaced Mr Simon Hamilton
- 3 With effect from 1 October 2013 Mr Trevor Lunn replaced Mr Stewart Dickson
- 4 With effect from 26 September 2011 Mrs Sandra Overend replaced Mr Mike Nesbitt
- 5 With effect from 23 April 2011 Mr John McCallister replaced Mrs Sandra Overend
- 6 With effect from 04 March 2013 Mr Seán Rogers filled the vacancy created by the departure of Mr John McCallister from the Committee
- 7 With effect from the 1 December 2014, Mr Sammy Douglas replaced Mr Paul Givan
- 8 With effect from 8 December 2014, Mr Alastair Ross replaced Mr Sammy Douglas
- 9 With effect from 12 September 2011 Mr Pat Doherty replaced Mr Paul Maskey
- 10 With effect from 10 September 2012 Ms Caitríona Ruane filled the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr Pat Doherty from the Assembly
- 11 With effect from 9 February 2015 Mr Robin Swann replaced Mr Roy Beggs

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List of Abbreviations & Acronyms Used

AERC	Assembly and Executive Review Committee
ALL	Alliance
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party (Northern Ireland)
IFRP	Independent Financial Review Panel
MEP	Member of the European Parliament
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
OFMDFM	Office of the First Minister and the deputy First Minister
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
QUB	Queen's University Belfast
SDLP	Social, Democratic and Labour Party
SF	Sinn Féin
TD	Teachta Dála
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
WRDA	Women's Resource and Development Agency

Executive Summary

1. The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly that was established to:
 - make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.
2. On 24 June 2014, the Committee agreed the Terms of Reference for its Review of Women and the Northern Ireland Assembly.
3. As set out in the Terms of Reference, the Review considered evidence on Women and the Northern Ireland Assembly in order to:
 - Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly;
 - Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly;
 - Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly; and
 - Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly.

The Committee agreed that alternative electoral systems/models were outside the scope of this Review.

The Committee concluded that:

- I. The under-representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland is a serious issue which must be addressed as matter of urgency.
- II. The Assembly and political parties play a key role in encouraging women to seek and secure election to the Northern Ireland Assembly.
- III. Civil society and the education sector have an important contribution to make in encouraging women to consider a career in politics.
- IV. The Executive's strategies and policies if designed, delivered and appropriately funded can enable women at all levels of society to balance their caring responsibilities with a career in politics.
- V. The media plays an important role in informing society's views about the work of female politicians and the contribution they make to political life in Northern Ireland.

The Committee considered, but could not agree on, the introduction of quotas and legislation in respect of financial penalties for political parties should they fail to meet an agreed gender quota.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations for Political Parties in Northern Ireland

1. The Committee recommended that political parties should consider developing targeted membership strategies to encourage more women to get involved and become members of their parties.
2. The Committee recognised that high profile female MLAs can act as positive role models and recommended that political parties should take this into account when making political appointments in the Assembly.
3. The Committee recommended that political parties should strive to develop mentoring programmes for aspiring politicians both at local government and within the Assembly.
4. The Committee recommended that initiatives designed to increase female candidacies are widely known and extensively promoted within a party, are given strong positive and public support by the party leadership and are communicated to supporters.
5. The Committee recommended that political parties review their internal media strategy to ensure greater visibility of female politicians.
6. The Committee recommended that, if not already provided, political parties should consider the introduction of diversity awareness training, advice and support available to party members involved in the candidate selection process.
7. The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider the introduction of measures to increase the number of female candidates being put forward for election. However, the Committee recognised that the decision on which, if any, measures to introduce remained a decision for the political parties.
8. The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider collecting and publishing anonymised diversity data on candidates.
9. The Committee recommended that if not already in place, political parties should develop policies relating to maternity and paternity leave for politicians and party staff.
10. The Committee recommended that political parties should develop procedures for dealing sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying if these are not already in place.

Recommendations for the Northern Ireland Assembly

11. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to engage with young women and school girls to discover why they are not engaging in political life and what positive initiatives could be brought forward as a result.
12. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider adopting measures from local, national and international best practice to create a gender sensitive Northern Ireland Assembly.
13. The Committee recommended that all initiatives designed to increase and support women in the Northern Ireland Assembly should be given strong support from the Assembly leadership.
14. Furthermore the Committee recommended that, where possible, the Assembly should consider how it can support political parties in implementing the recommendations from this Review.

15. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should establish a working group on a gender sensitive parliament. The working group should have equal membership of male and female MLAs.
16. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should conduct a gender survey across all Members to identify the key barriers and challenges and, based on the feedback received, develop a gender action plan with specific measures to help Members balance family life with their political career.
17. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should undertake a review of voting mechanisms used in other legislatures as a means of facilitating family friendly sittings.
18. The Committee recommended that following the next Assembly elections, the Assembly should carry out an anonymous survey of all candidates to identify the barriers and challenges they encountered.
19. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to develop and deliver training and capacity building programmes to assist female MLAs in carrying out their role as elected public representatives.
20. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider targeted engagement with the media, civil society and schools to profile the work of female MLAs.
21. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider hosting at least one annual event to highlight the work of female politicians. This could coincide with either International Women's Day or during Parliamentary Week.
22. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should ensure, where possible, gender representation be considered when agreeing official delegations from the Assembly.
23. The Committee recommended that the Assembly should facilitate the creation of a women's parliamentary caucus.
24. The Committee recommended that the Assembly through Assembly Research and Information Services should assist Committees undertake gender based analysis of public policies and budgets.

Recommendations for the Northern Ireland Executive

25. The Committee recommended that the Executive should ensure that its future childcare and gender equality strategies are designed, delivered and appropriately funded to enable women at all levels of society to balance their caring responsibilities with a career in politics.
26. The Committee recommended that the Executive should ensure improved information sharing, monitoring and accountability in the implementation of the new gender equality strategy across all departments to ensure that all strategic objectives are met within the agreed timescales and that lessons are learned from the implementation of the existing Gender Equality Strategy (2006-2016).
27. The Committee recommended that Executive Ministers should state their commitment to addressing gender inequality in Northern Ireland.
28. The Committee recommended that consideration be given to the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in Executive policies and legislation development.
29. The Committee recommended that the Executive should take steps to increase the diversity of public bodies and in particular introduce measures to address the gender imbalance in public appointments in Northern Ireland.

Introduction

1. On 10 September 2013 the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) reviewed a number of papers commissioned from the Assembly's Research and Information Service. This included the paper on 'Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly' (NIAR 570-13) which provided the background to women's representation in politics, outlined the legislative frameworks relevant to women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly and reviewed some mechanisms for increasing female representation.
2. The paper identified that the Northern Ireland Assembly has one of the lowest levels of female representation of devolved and national legislatures in the UK and Ireland. Dáil Éireann has less but has recently introduced quotas for women candidates in the next elections. The paper described how in a European context, with the exceptions of Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has the lowest levels of female representation of comparable devolved institutions in Western Europe.
3. On the 10 March 2014 the Northern Ireland Assembly debated the following motion relating to women in politics: *"That this Assembly recognises the lack of female representation in politics and public life; further recognises the positive outcomes that result in tackling this inequality, when support and training programmes are put in place to encourage more female candidates to stand in elections; and calls for the introduction of a training and support programme to encourage more female candidates to stand for election."* The Motion was carried without division.
4. In March 2014 the Assembly's Research and Information Service provided an updated paper for the Assembly and Executive Review Committee in the context of the Committee's consideration of topics for review. At its meeting of 8 April 2014 the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) agreed the next topic for consideration would be 'Women and Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly'.
5. At the Committee meeting of 24 June 2014, the Assembly's Research and Information Service presented a paper entitled 'Who Runs Northern Ireland? A Summary of Statistics Relating to Gender and Power' which provided statistics on gender representation in decision-making positions in Northern Ireland. At the same meeting Professor Yvonne Galligan, Director of the Centre of Advancement of Women into Politics at Queen's University Belfast, gave evidence to the Committee on models of good practice in other legislatures and how these might be adopted in the Northern Ireland Assembly. A copy of the Minutes of Evidence for this evidence session can be found in Appendix 2.
6. On 24 June 2014, the Committee agreed the terms of reference for its 'Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly'. The terms of reference and the Committee's approach to the Review are set out in the next section of this Report.

The Committee's Approach to the Review

7. The Committee agreed the terms of reference of this Review on 24 June 2014 as follows:
 - i. Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly
 - ii. Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly
 - iii. Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly

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- iv. Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly
 8. The Committee agreed that alternative electoral systems / models were outside of the scope of the Review.
 9. In its approach to this Review the Committee agreed a number of methods in which to gather the evidence on this issue. This included Assembly Research and Information Service, expert witnesses, a call for evidence and exploration of the initiatives adopted by other legislatures to increase women's participation in politics.
 10. In response to its 'Call for Evidence' the Committee received twenty submissions from a variety of stakeholders ranging from the women's and youth sector, equality organisations, academics, trade unions and political parties.
 11. The Committee heard oral evidence from women's groups, a senior academic from Queen's University Belfast and the former Deputy Speaker to the Assembly. Copies of the Minutes of Evidence for these evidence sessions can be found in Appendix 2.
 12. The Committee commissioned and considered a series of research papers from Assembly Research and Information Service on a number of issues including: women in the Assembly; women in local councils and in the 2014 local elections in NI; the use of political quotas; training and support programmes for women in politics; women and public appointments in Northern Ireland; the applicability of job sharing, twinning and zipping mechanisms in Northern Ireland; and legislation by Dáil Éireann which provides for the introduction of financial penalties should parties fail to meet an agreed gender quota. The Committee also commissioned research on the representation of women in politics in Sweden and the sittings and voting times in Sweden, Ireland, the UK and the NI Assembly. Copies of the seventeen research papers commissioned by the Committee can be found Appendix 5.
 13. In June and September 2014, the Committee undertook two study visits to Wales and Iceland to explore models of good practice that aim to increase the number of women in politics. Copy of the blogs on the visits can be found here: <http://blog.niassembly.gov.uk/2014/06/committee-visits-wales-to-explore.html> A copy of both reports can be found at Appendix 4.
 14. Finally the Committee held an Inquiry stakeholder event on 23 October 2014 in Parliament Buildings. Over sixty stakeholders attended the roundtable which was opened by the two Junior Ministers from OFMdFM. Each of the roundtables was chaired by Members of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee and the Chairperson of the OFMdFM Committee. The gender spokesperson from each of the five large political parties closed the event with their own personal perspective. A copy of the programme for this event can be found in Appendix 4 and the Minutes of Evidence can be found in Appendix 2.

Committee Scrutiny

Existing Initiatives by the Northern Ireland Assembly

15. Information was gathered on what the Assembly has been doing in order to address gender inequalities within the Assembly Secretariat. The Committee was advised that in June 2013, at the request of the Clerk/Chief Executive, a group of senior staff (male and female) met to discuss how the Secretariat might examine the existence of any barriers, whether perceived or actual, in relation to gender within the Northern Ireland Assembly Secretariat and to consider what actions might be necessary.
16. Following this meeting Directors were asked to nominate senior members of staff to form a Gender Action Plan Steering Group. The Gender Action Plan Steering Group is currently working on the development of a Gender Action Plan for the Assembly Secretariat.
17. The Committee also received correspondence from the then Speaker to the Assembly on 19 May 2014 in which he re-stated his desire to see a greater number of women elected to the Assembly in future. The former Speaker indicated that *“this is an area where the Assembly needed to see improvement in future elections and I therefore think the Committee’s initiative on this subject could be very significant”*. The former Speaker drew the Committee’s attention to his work in building links with the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales, Dame Rosemary Butler, who spearheaded the ‘Women in Public Life’ initiative in the Welsh Assembly. In a letter to the Committee dated 10 February 2015, the current Speaker expressed his commitment to continue to this work. Correspondence from the former and current Speakers of the Northern Ireland Assembly can be found in Appendix 4.
18. Information was gathered on the range of initiatives and programmes currently being undertaken by the Assembly which are focused on engaging with young women and supporting and promoting the female Members of the Assembly. These included initiatives provided through the Assembly’s Outreach and Engagement unit and Politics Plus. Details of these initiatives can be found in Appendix 4.
19. The Northern Ireland Assembly’s Engagement and Outreach Unit has focused on engaging with women through its business, community and parliamentary outreach initiatives. This work has involved facilitating the Assembly’s involvement in the Commonwealth Parliamentarians (CWP) Group.
20. The Engagement and Outreach Unit, through its business areas Assembly Community Connect (ACC) and the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT), has hosted and attended a number of events specifically targeting women’s groups to inform them about how they can get involved with the Assembly, the political process and political life. Additionally, Assembly Community Connect has developed an active contact database of over 250 women’s groups from across Northern Ireland that it engages with regularly to promote training opportunities and events which encourage greater representation of women in politics.
21. The Assembly also provides funding to the organisation ‘Politics Plus’ to provide a range of programmes for members of the Assembly. One of the strategic aims of this organisation is to strengthen the role of women in political and public life. Politics Plus has previously facilitated a “Women in Politics” programme which attracted female Assembly Members across all political parties. The programme was delivered through workshops, one-to-one sessions, study trips (including a study visit to Westminster) and stakeholder engagement events. In addition to this, Politics Plus also facilitated a number of additional training events which are open to all Members.

22. The Assembly currently provides Members with a childcare allowance to help meet the costs of childcare while a qualifying Member is at work. The provision for support for Members' childcare is contained in a Determination of the Assembly which cannot be altered or amended by the Assembly Commission. In addition, all aspects of financial support for Members now fall to the Independent Financial Review Panel (IFRP).

All Party Group on UN Security Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security Briefing

23. The Committee took evidence from the All Party Group on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women Peace and Security on 27 May 2014. Ms Paula Bradley MLA is the Chairperson of the Assembly's All-Party Group on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Peace and Security and agreed to provide a briefing to the Committee on its work. Ms Bradley MLA was accompanied by Dr Ann Marie Gray, a member of the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP), which provides the secretariat support to the All-Party Group. A copy of the Minutes of Evidence for this evidence session can be found in Appendix 2.
24. Ms Bradley MLA provided an overview of the All Party Group's engagement in a recent Westminster Inquiry on the situation of women in Northern Ireland. Ms Bradley MLA indicated that evidence received as part of the Westminster Inquiry highlighted that there are problems in our local communities, and women's voices are being suppressed. Ms Bradley described the role of women in our communities prior to the Belfast Agreement and stated that as a society we have taken a backward step on the role of women since then.
25. This view was echoed by Dr Gray who stated that the evidence received indicated how in the past women in local communities would have had greater control over projects and budgets but that this is no longer the case in some communities.
26. The All Party Group made a number of recommendations including:
- The need for the youth and education sectors to educate young people on politics and its contribution to society;
 - The need to encourage more women to seek election at the local government level which could make a difference to representation at the Assembly;
 - Greater promotion of existing female politicians as role models and to ensure they are visible in the media;
 - Ensuring that women in rural areas have the support required to play their role in local government; and
 - The need to develop and implement fundamental social policies (on issues such as childcare and transport) that would help women into politics and into the labour market.

Committee Visit to Wales

27. In March 2014 the Committee considered an Assembly Research paper which advised that 42% of Members in the National Assembly for Wales were women. Furthermore, the Committee noted that the Presiding Officer of the Welsh Assembly had instigated a specific initiative to encourage more women into public life which included the establishment of a cross-party 'Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus'.
28. From 4-5 June 2014, members of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee visited the National Assembly for Wales and took evidence from the Presiding Officer, women of the Assembly's Cross Party Women's Caucus, NGOs involved in the Initiatives and academics. Key issues discussed included:

- The pathways into politics for women including through local councils, public appointments etc.;
- Measures to increase awareness of politics among women and young girls;
- The importance of networks such as the Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus;
- The need for female role models in politics and senior management; and
- Measures which the political parties could take to increase the number of women engaged in political life – including the use of quotas, twinning and zipping, additional financial resources and greater engagement with community activists.

Copy of the blog on the visits can be found here: <http://blog.niassembly.gov.uk/2014/06/committee-visits-wales-to-explore.html>

A copy of the report on the Committee's visit can be found at Appendix 4.

Professor Yvonne Galligan – Centre for Advancement for Women in Politics, QUB

29. On 24 June 2014 Professor Yvonne Galligan from the Centre for Advancement for Women in Politics at Queen's University Belfast provided a briefing on models of good practice in other legislatures and how these could be adopted into the Northern Ireland Assembly. A copy of the Minutes of Evidence for this evidence session can be found in Appendix 2.
30. Professor Galligan highlighted the marked gender imbalance in politics in Northern Ireland. Professor Galligan stressed how political parties and the Assembly are in a position to take creative steps to support and facilitate women's access to and participation in the working of the Assembly, as well as in public and political life more generally. In response to a query from a Member, Professor Galligan agreed that *"The quota strategy opens a space for the culture and the structural obstacles to be removed, and for the culture to open up, which means that women get the opportunity to run that they would not necessarily have had before"*
31. Professor Galligan raised a number of questions and recommendations relating to the Assembly's status as a gender sensitive institution. These included the need to:
 - Develop a gender action plan;
 - Conduct a gender audit to identify problems and issues about women's participation in the Assembly;
 - Review the Assembly's policies and procedures in relation to issues related to gender equality and if necessary develop policies to address gaps; and
 - Explore and facilitate gender-mainstreaming across all Committee business.

Committee Visit to Iceland

32. In June 2014 the Committee agreed to visit one of the four Nordic countries – Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden - who have consistently held the highest positions in the Global Gender Gap Index published by the World Economic Forum. The Committee had originally intended to visit Sweden but due to the timing of the Swedish elections it was agreed that the Committee would visit Iceland.
33. In the Global Gender Gap Index, published by the World Economic Forum, Iceland was ranked first for the past 5 years with 40% of parliamentary seats held by women. The Icelandic Government has taken systematic steps to introduce and promote gender equality in all areas of society. Iceland has had special legislation introduced to ensure equality between women and men and their equality status in all respects since 1976.

34. Iceland has a strong record on women in ministerial level positions (one-third of current Ministers) and at a local level (40% of council members since the 2010 municipal elections).
35. Political parties in Iceland have voluntary party quotas and women elected in the 2013 elections hold 39.7% of parliamentary seats (42.9% in 2009). In order to promote gender equality, the Government has run a four year Gender Action Programme. The programme includes a detailed plan of action and an estimate of the funding needed for individual projects on equality issues.
36. The Committee visited Iceland from 24-26 September 2014. During the visit Members met with the Minister responsible for gender equality, the Chairperson and Members of the Committee with responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the gender equality programme. During the visit AERC Members also met with the women's sector and academics. The following were the key lessons learned from the visit:

Positive external factors can lead to an increase in women becoming involved in politics such as:

- gender budgeting can ensure resources are allocated to areas that would support an increase of women in decision making roles;
- the availability of affordable, flexible and quality childcare; and
- the introduction of flexible maternity / paternity leave. Parental leave in Iceland is 3 months for mothers, 3 months for fathers and a further 3 months to be taken up by either mother or father
- Political parties need to recognise that they have an important role to play in supporting and sustaining women in political life;
- Political parties and the legislative Assembly need to consider the workload and time required to complete the duties of a political representative and in particular recognise the challenges faced by women who live in rural areas;
- Political parties need to build relationships with the women's sector in order to attract women into politics;
- The women's sector should be provided with the necessary resources;
- Political parties and the legislative assembly should encourage a woman's network;
- A gender action plan should be established at local government and within the national assembly;
- Gender stereotyping should be addressed from early school age; and
- Young people need to be encouraged to consider a career in politics.
- The introduction of positive actions by political parties to increase female representation – Parties vary on the methods used – for example all women shortlists, voluntary quotas etc - but they all hold the same aims and vision in addressing gender equality in politics
- Introduction of quotas in public appointments - Iceland passed a quota law in 2010 (40% from each sex by 2013) applicable to publicly owned and publicly limited companies with more than 50 employees

A Copy of the blog on this visit can be found here: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/assembly-business/committees/assembly-and-executive-review/reviews/women-in-politics-and-the-northern-ireland-assembly>

A full copy of the Committee's report on the visit to Iceland can be found at Appendix 4

Women's Resource and Development Agency

37. On 16 September 2014 the Committee took evidence from Ms Anne McVicker, Director of the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA). Ms McVicker was accompanied by the following members of WRDA Ms Lynn Carvill, Chief Executive of Women'sTEC, and Ms Annie Campbell, Director of Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland. A copy of the Minutes of Evidence for this evidence session can be found in Appendix 2.
38. WRDA provided evidence on the barriers and challenges faced by women in Northern Ireland. The following key barriers were highlighted:
- The lack of affordable and accessible childcare in Northern Ireland;
 - Society's perception of women as carers which leads to women putting their careers on hold to look after children;
 - The adversarial culture of politics in Northern Ireland;
 - A lack of confidence among women with a lack of female role models in political life; and
 - Continuing employment discrimination.
39. In its briefing to the Committee the WRDA made a number of recommendations including the need for:
- A review of facilities, working conditions and hours of sittings including consideration of job sharing;
 - Provision of mentoring programmes, skills, training and funding for women candidates;
 - Reserved seats for women or the introduction of gender quotas;
 - More female role models in political life;
 - The Programme for Government to include a range of measurable actions; and
 - Men who champion women's issues.

Ms. Jane Morrice – Former MLA and Deputy Speaker, Northern Ireland Assembly

40. Ms Jane Morrice is a former MLA (June 1998-April 2003) and Deputy Speaker (February 2000-April 2003) of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee invited Ms Morrice on 7 October 2014 to brief the Committee on her experience of the barriers and challenges facing female politicians in the Northern Ireland Assembly. A copy of the Minutes of Evidence from this evidence session can be found in Appendix 2.
41. With regards to the psychological barriers Ms Morrice spoke of her own personal experience as an MLA and in particular of *"the incessant attempts to demean, humiliate and treat with disdain. Lots of people remember it. Someone just mentioned to me on the way in how we were treated as female Assembly Members. However, interestingly enough, we were often told that it was not discrimination at all — that all politicians treated each other that way, so it was not discrimination. Daily, I was reminded, "This is politics, my dear". I have to say that I did not like it."*
42. Ms Morrice highlighted the lack of confidence among women – and she particularly identified older women who do not believe their own self-worth.
43. Ms Morrice argued that the individual psychological barriers are harder to overcome compared to the institutional barriers which are simpler to explain and easier to address.
44. Ms Morrice also spoke about the subjective media coverage of female politicians which focused on their appearance the role of the media. Ms Morrice contended that *"most of the men in the building would not be treated in the way that some of the media treat the women."*

45. Ms Morrice in her evidence argued that the Assembly and political parties should consider a number of actions which would lead to increasing women in politics which include:
- the introduction of voluntary quotas;
 - an Assembly gender action plan; and
 - specific training for female MLAs, mentoring schemes for aspiring female politicians and capacity building.

Committee Call for Evidence

46. In July 2014 the Committee issued a Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' paper as part of its Review on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly. The paper contained 6 questions:
- What challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics?
 - What evidence could stakeholders provide on initiatives which demonstrate positive outcomes to encourage more women?
 - What policies should political parties have in place to increase women?
 - Political parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place?
 - What 'positive actions' would you recommend?
 - What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in politics?
47. Information on the 'Call for Evidence' paper was issued through the local newspapers and letters were issued to key stakeholders who included academics, the women's sector and political parties.
48. This action resulted in the Committee receiving twenty detailed responses from academics, women's groups and organisations, political parties, trade unions, the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Human Rights Commission for Northern Ireland. A copy of the submissions received can be found at Appendix 3.
49. A review of the 'Call for Evidence' responses identified a number of key issues including the need to:
- Gender proof the institutional setting of the Assembly;
 - Increase the number of female MLAs to address the current gender imbalance;
 - Introduce measures which political parties could take to promote female politicians;
 - Address the bottleneck in the candidate selection process; and
 - Address the socio-cultural and psychological barriers which prevent women from entering into political life.
50. The Committee's considerations of the key issues raised in the submissions are detailed in the 'Committee Consideration of Key Barriers' section below.

Committee Inquiry Roundtable Event

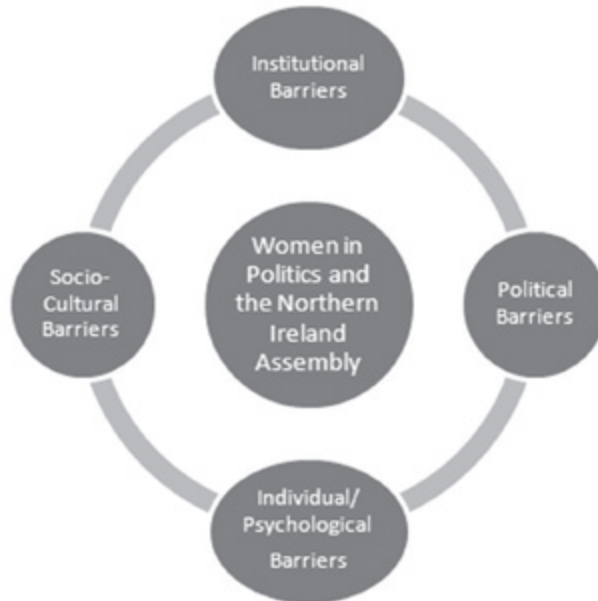
51. The Committee agreed to hold a roundtable event on 23 October 2014 in the Long Gallery in Parliament Buildings to engage AERC members and other politicians directly with key stakeholder organisations in Northern Ireland and beyond on the main issues arising from this Review.
52. The event was opened by the two Junior Ministers from OFMdfM Mr Jonathan Bell MLA and Ms Jennifer McCann MLA. In her speech, Minister McCann stated "*Women now make up 52%*

of the population in the North. Therefore, it is only right and proper that women's interests be represented in politics and all aspects of life.” Minister McCann spoke about the onus on political parties and women themselves to encourage and support more women in politics in Northern Ireland and stressed the need for “gender equality throughout all political parties, and that the barriers that prevent women from coming forward into political and civil life are removed.”

53. In his speech Minister Bell spoke about the importance of the AERC's review of 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly'. Minister Bell stated that *“Institutional, systemic and individual barriers limit women's influence in decision making structures in most walks of life, including economic and political institutions, trade unions, the media and religious bodies. It is incumbent on all of us to help remove those barriers and play our part in redressing the imbalance. We need to challenge the stereotyping that still exists. We need to create an environment in which women are empowered, enabled and, above all, valued for the important contribution that they make to public life in Northern Ireland.”*
54. To set the context for the roundtable discussions four guest speakers were invited to present on the following themes noted below.
 - What kind of initiatives, including 'positive actions' should the NI Assembly consider? – Evelyn Collins CBE, Equality Commission for NI
 - What could Political Parties do to strengthen their policies on women and politics? - Fidelma Ashe, University of Ulster
 - What is the Government doing to encourage more women into politics and decision making? – Patricia Carey, OFMdFM
 - What did the Local Government Staff Commission for NI do for women in Local Councils? – Diana Stewart, Local Government Staff Commission NI.
55. After each presentation participants were invited to consider and prioritise the measures which the Assembly, political parties and the Executive should take to maintain and increase the number of women in politics in Northern Ireland.
56. The gender spokespersons from each of the five main political parties closed the event. The Members spoke about their own personal experience as women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, explained how they got into politics and some of the barriers they have had to overcome.
57. A summary of the key issues discussed at each of the roundtables was prepared for consideration by the Committee at its meeting of 4 November 2014. Below are a number of key recommendations highlighted at the event, these included:
 - The establishment of a statutory gender equality Committee within the Assembly;
 - The introduction of quotas and zipping measures by political parties;
 - The introduction of measures to increase the number of women candidates including the use of financial penalties;
 - The promotion of women in politics through events on International Women's Day;
 - General agreement that the 'Women in Local Councils: Making Difference' initiative should be adopted by the Assembly;
 - A review of how the Assembly works to ensure a better work/life balance;
 - Political parties should be more proactive in making women more visible in the media on all issues; and
 - Greater monitoring and accountability for the implementation of the gender equality strategy across all departments.
58. A copy of the Minutes of Evidence from this event can be found in Appendix 2.

Committee Consideration of Key Barriers and Challenges

59. From the evidence received, written and oral, the key challenges/barriers faced by women seeking entry into political life could be mapped into four separate headings as illustrated below.
60. The following section of this Report reflects the Committee's deliberations on the key barriers and challenges as noted in the submissions provided by key stakeholders under the 'Call for Evidence', including those provided by political parties.



Institutional Barriers

61. The adversarial environment of the Assembly was raised by numerous stakeholders as a key barrier which creates a negative perception of political life for many women.
62. As noted by the **Women's Forum NI** in their submission *"the behaviour of Assembly Members is frequently intimidating and creates a negative perception which makes women wary of putting their heads above the parapet."*
63. This view was echoed by the **SDLP** in their submission in which they noted that unlike other political systems *"there are however additional challenges for women in Northern Ireland as it is set to an adversarial style of politics arranged along communal and conflict lines which can be intimidating and off putting."*
64. In its evidence to the Committee, the **Women's Resource and Development Agency** stated *"really the key issue is that the culture of politics is seen as problematic to many women. It is often male, often seen as aggressive and adversarial. Given the experience over the past years, it is felt that much of politics is about playing games. Many women simply do not like that and, consequently; they are more likely to get involved in community action and development rather than formal political life or related decision-making agencies."*
65. In its submission **Sinn Féin** noted that *"at times the culture of the Assembly is very hostile to women and slow to deal with sexism and misogyny that women politicians have to endure on a regular basis."*

66. The anti-social hours of Assembly sittings, particularly when required to vote, was viewed by many stakeholders as an obstacle for aspiring female politicians – particularly those in rural areas who had to balance family life and/or caring responsibilities.
67. In its submission, the **SDLP** noted that *“Northern Ireland currently has the lowest level of childcare provision in Britain. Political life often has inflexible, family unfriendly working hours and little or no access to affordable on-site childcare leads to a serious work/life imbalance.”*
68. The submissions called on the Assembly to review its sitting times and meeting times to ensure they are family friendly. As **Professor Galligan, QUB**, noted in her submission *“changes to parliamentary working times in order to accommodate the balancing of work and family responsibilities is a common reform in assemblies wishing to institute a more gender-sensitive approach.”*

Political Barriers

69. All parties who provided evidence to the Committee were in agreement that more needed to be done by political parties to address the current gender imbalance in the Northern Ireland Assembly and to encourage more women into politics.
70. In its submission the **UUP** stated that the Party *“has recognised the under representation of women within elected bodies and is actively supporting female members to increase their representation and encouraging more to put themselves forward for selection and election.”*
71. Similarly the **DUP** in its written submission to the Committee recognised that *“women are under-represented in all levels of government in proportion to demographics.”*
72. The **Alliance Party** in its submission considered that the under-representation of women in politics is not down to the electorate *“who appear to be as likely to elect female politicians as male ones. Therefore the issues lie with encouraging women to stand in the first instance.”*
73. **Sinn Féin** in its submission stated that the party is *“leading in terms of political parties but it has a way to go and the women in Sinn Féin and many of the men want to see continuous improvement in relation to the representation of women at all levels of the party.”*
74. In its submission, the **Training for Women Network (NI)** noted *“increasing the number of women representatives is key to advancing gender equality and makes women more visible. Seeing more women take up leadership roles can change voters perceptions about what is a ‘good candidate’ because they realise that women can be as effective as men in politics.”*
75. In the written and oral evidence received by the Committee, it was overwhelmingly agreed that not enough women are being selected by their parties. There was also an acknowledgement, by witnesses and a number of Members of the Committee, that unlike their male counterparts most women wait until they are asked or approached, usually on several occasions, before making the decision to stand.
76. As noted by the **Women’s Forum NI** in its submission *“political parties must be more pro-active in bringing women into the process. Although there has been some improvement, not enough women are being selected as candidates for their parties. Most women wait until they are asked or approached.”*
77. The issue of candidate selection has been identified as one of the most important obstacles to women’s political participation. In its submission **Women’sTec** stated that *“efforts by political parties to recruit and select women must be viewed as the single biggest barrier to women’s participation.”*
78. Candidate selection was also considered a key barrier by a number of political parties. In its submission the **Alliance Party** stated that *“the tendency to value a history of party political activity over other types of experience for selection is a problem.”*

79. The **SDLP** in its submission highlighted that *“the fact that few women are selected to run is borne out in research done by the Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics who in their report ‘Gender and the Northern Ireland Local Elections 2014 found that of the 906 candidates, 222 (24.5%) were women.”*
80. In its submission **Sinn Féin** considered that the *“lack of quotas, or financial penalties for failing to elect a certain percentage of women to be one of the areas which mitigates against women entering politics.”*
81. This view was echoed by **NUS-USI** in its submission when they noted *“a potential lack of compulsory positive action by the state or by political parties to encourage more women to get involved in politics could also be a barrier.”*
82. A number of submissions including that from **Claire McGing, Maynooth University** noted that women can also have less access to financial resources than men and can be deterred from entering politics due to the financial commitments required. A lack of financial resources can be a difficulty not alone with the cost of elections, but also with the financial burden of day to day campaigning.
83. As noted by the **Equality Commission for NI** in its submission *“women can also have less access to financial resources than men and can be deterred from entering politics due to the financial commitments required.”* This view was echoed in the **SDLP** submission which noted that *“the financial strain of entering politics, a lack of resources and fundraising capabilities can be a big factor in deciding to run for election. The party considered that “political parties should provide dedicated campaign funds to assist candidates running.”*
84. In her evidence to the Committee, **Jane Morrice** identified the need for *“public pronouncement”* by political leaders to ensure that all party members understood that the initiatives designed to increase the number of female representatives were supported from the top. This view was echoed by numerous stakeholders including the **SDLP** in its written submission which stated *“ultimately parties need to ensure that all initiatives designed to increase women’s candidacies are widely known, extensively promoted and given strong support positive support from leaders and supporters.”*

Socio-Economic Barriers

85. The **DUP** noted in its written submission the cultural and societal challenges facing women seeking to enter political life *“politics is portrayed and often accepted by many in society as very much a male career choice with little or no encouragement given to women from an early age to participate in the political arena.”*
86. This view was reflected in the submissions received by the Committee which indicated that women perceive themselves to have less support than men at grass-roots level as they don’t fit the profile of *“white, middle-class male”*.
87. The **SDLP** in its submission noted that *“Northern Ireland political institutions and electoral functions impede women’s participation as it still retains a very traditional male dominated political culture.”*
88. In his paper ‘Candidate Selection and the Representation of Women in Northern Ireland’, **Neil Matthews, QUB**, noted that *“certainly in the context of the UK, Northern Ireland exhibits the most regressive attitudes to women’s formal political involvement and the substantial socio-cultural factors which exist in the region must not be understated.”* Matthews noted that the findings from his evidence gathering process suggested that *“women’s internalisation of certain gendered social norms, primarily their role as domestic carers, represents a hugely significant barrier to improving levels of female representation in Northern Ireland.”*

89. The lack of affordable and flexible childcare in Northern Ireland was repeatedly raised as a significant barrier in the written and oral evidence received by the Committee. The **Northern Ireland Women's European Platform** noted that the *"lack of affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare restricts participation in public life. However these barriers can easily be overcome through appropriate positive actions which promote gender equality."*
90. The **Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network** which represents many women's groups stated in its submission to the Committee *"the lack of flexible, affordable childcare was stated by all as a barrier to participation in NI politics. Northern Irish culture our members felt dictates that women are the primary caregivers (so if there are two careers in a family, women tend to be the one to step back and pick up the family responsibilities)."*
91. In their submissions **Sinn Féin, Alliance Party, DUP and the Green Party** also noted that many women are prevented from entering politics because of their caring responsibilities which means they do not even consider a career in public life. As the **DUP** noted in its submission *"this in line with time commitments as an elected representative can be seen as overwhelming and in turn off putting for many women."*
92. Another key barrier identified in the evidence received was the lack of female role models and the poor profiling of female politicians by both parties and the Assembly. It was considered that much more work needed to be done to profile the work of existing female MLAs and thereby demystify the work of the Assembly for aspiring female politicians. As the **Irish Congress of Trade Unions** noted in its submission *"if young women do not see women, and particularly young women, in Local Government and the Assembly in substantial numbers there is little to encourage them to enter political life."*
93. **Professor Yvonne Galligan, QUB**, in her submission to the Committee recommended *"one way of stimulating women's political ambitions is to profile female politicians as role models. This has found to be an effective stimulus to women's greater interest in, and attachment to, politics. This strategy is particularly effective in the early stages of addressing the political gender imbalance."*
94. **Sinn Féin** also cited the lack of female role models, the under representation of women in the media, on boards and in public appointments as key barriers. The party indicated its support for a proactive approach to promoting women into positions of leadership including the use of *"quotas for women on public boards."*
95. The **Alliance Party** in its submission considered that lessons could be learnt from other countries where women are more adequately represented not just in political life but where there is *"greater representation for women in senior positions in a wider range of social and economic sectors."*
96. An Assembly Research paper commissioned by the Committee on 'Women in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland' (NIAR 570-13) highlighted the significant under-representation of females in public boards across Executive Departments. The paper noted that *"a recent annual report (November 2014) on public appointments in Northern Ireland indicates that 34% of these are held by women. This is broken down as 35% of all public appointments and 22% of all chairs of public bodies."*
97. The need to address the significant under-representation of women in public appointments was highlighted by participants at the Committee Inquiry event who considered that *"if women are more visible in public appointments this will filter into everything else."* Participants considered that the *"public appointment process needs more public promotion and research in regards to encouraging women participation. Participants called for the criteria for public appointments to be reviewed to identify whether the process is biased against women."*
98. This view was supported by the **Commissioner for Public Appointments NI** in his report 'Under-representation and lack of diversity in public appointments in Northern Ireland' (January 2014) who noted that *"even though more people might be encouraged to apply for*

board positions, the processes used to select them have been left unchanged and the same type of candidates as of old have [or at least in the public perception appear to have] an unfair advantage in competitions for board places. In either case [real or perceived disadvantage] the effect is negative, putting people off and creating scepticism about public appointments.” The Commissioner for Public Appointments NI regulates, monitors and reports on public appointments procedures.

99. In her evidence to the Committee, **Jane Morrice** also highlighted the need for political parties and the Assembly to do more to raise the profile of female politicians in the media. Ms Morrice noted that “we do not see as many female Assembly Members on the TV as we should. I do not know whether that is down to a party decision when it puts names forward or whether it is down to the women finding it difficult to offer themselves because of a fear that they will not toe the party line. I would be interested to know what parties do when it comes to putting women onto the TV as spokespeople.”
100. A number of submissions received by the Committee also pointed to the often subjective and inappropriate media coverage of female politicians. As noted by the **Northern Ireland Women’s Forum** in its submission “media coverage of women in politics is frequently biased. Inappropriate reference is made to their appearance, what they are wearing etc.”
101. This view was supported by the **Irish Congress of Trade Unions** in its submission. It stated that “the media and the stereotypes it perpetrates can also constitute a challenge to those seeking election. Mainstream media is often prone to cultivating a negative stereotypical portrayal of women politicians, with a tendency to put them down and not focus on political achievement.”

Individual/Psychological Barriers

102. **Professor Yvonne Galligan, QUB**, in her submission to the Committee spoke about the “individual challenges’ facing women seeking to enter political life which ‘may have to do with personal sense of confidence in taking part in politics, with all of its attendant consequences for personal privacy, financial costs, time demands and family life.”
103. In its submission to the Committee, the **Equality Commission NI** drew on the conclusions of the recent Westminster Inquiry ‘Improving Parliament: Creating a Better and More Representative House’ by the All Party Parliamentary Group Women in Parliament (‘APPG Inquiry’) (2014). The Equality Commission noted that the “lack of confidence or low self-esteem has been shown to be major barriers to women putting themselves forward in political processes.”
104. In its submission the **Training for Women Network (NI)** suggested that steps should be taken to empower women. It considered that “in a supportive and positive learning environment women who take part in leadership programmes gain in self-confidence and in knowledge about their rights, which are necessary for them to decide to get involved in public life. Key to this is also the use of inspiring role models women can draw experience and confidence from.”
105. The **UUP** in its written submission considered that “some of the key challenges in increasing female representation include increasing the confidence and fine tuning the skill sets of potential candidates.”
106. The **Belfast Feminist Network** also called on the Assembly to address the lack of confidence in aspiring female politicians “to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics, the NI Assembly should participate in leadership development programmes from the community level and upwards to encourage women into community leadership positions and local councils, and consequently ensure there is a supply of women from all sectors of society represented in the NI Assembly.”

107. Numerous submissions to the Committee also called for the establishment of a Women's Parliamentary Caucus as an example of good practice in supporting existing female politicians and encouraging aspiring female politicians to enter politics. The **Irish Congress of Trade Unions** highlighted the work of the Westminster All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament whose purpose is to increase the number of women parliamentarians in all parties and to encourage female candidates to get involved in public life and to discuss and highlight barriers to this.

Committee Consideration of Positive Actions

Creating a Gender Sensitive Parliament

108. A significant body of the written and oral evidence received by the Committee focused on how the Assembly should seek to learn and adopt from best practice in creating a gender sensitive parliament. Recommendations were made to consider adopting best practice from local, national and international models. Examples of good practice at a local and national level included the 'Women in Local Councils: Making a Difference' initiative and the Welsh Assembly's 'Women in Public Life' initiative. The Committee also received evidence on a number of international models including the OSCE's Six Step Action Plan, the Inter-Parliamentary Union's comprehensive framework for creating Gender Sensitive Parliaments and the Swedish Riksdag's 15-point Gender Action Plan. (Appendix 4)
109. During Committee deliberations on this matter at the Committee meeting of 25 November 2014 and 9 December 2014, a representative from **Sinn Féin** called for the establishment of a women's caucus or an official gender committee to look at women's issues and drive forward gender change within the Assembly. The **Sinn Féin** representative considered that this Caucus could promote the role of existing politicians through the organisation of an annual event such as International Women's day and facilitate greater links with women's caucuses in other jurisdictions.
110. This initiative was also supported by the **SDLP** in its submission who called on the Assembly *"to develop a substantial cross party network of political women with membership made exclusive to women to focus on political and cultural difficulties facing women."*
111. The establishment of a cross party women's caucus had been discussed during the Committee visit to the National Assembly of Wales which has already established an 'Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus'.
112. Numerous submissions to the Committee also called for the establishment of a Women's Parliamentary Caucus as an example of good practice in supporting existing female politicians and encouraging aspiring female politicians to enter politics. The **Irish Congress of Trade Unions** highlighted the work of the Westminster All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament whose purpose is to increase the number of women parliamentarians in all parties and to encourage female candidates to get involved in public life and to discuss and highlight barriers to this.
113. In their written submissions to the Committee **Sinn Féin, Alliance Party** and the **UUP** recommended that the Assembly listen to women politicians and those candidates who stood for election to the Assembly to identify what they considered the barriers and challenges to be.
114. **Sinn Féin, SDLP** and a number of other submissions to the Committee also called for the development of a gender action plan to address the barriers and challenges identified.
115. Finally, it was considered by a number of stakeholders that as part of the commitment to create a gender sensitive parliament there could be scope for gender mainstreaming Committee business, so that outputs are gender sensitive. This view was supported by the **SDLP** in its written submission to the Committee which stated: *"as a parliamentary institution the assembly needs to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality through all parliamentary work."* Gender mainstreaming involves the incorporation of gender policies, programmes and practices and decision making so that at every stage of development and implementation, an analysis is made of the effects on women and men, and appropriate action taken.
116. In its written submission and at the Committee meeting of 9 December 2014, **Sinn Féin** also supported the adoption of gender budgeting and indeed **Professor Galligan** in her submission

to the Committee noted that there are lessons to be learned from the experience of gender budgeting in Scotland. Gender sensitive budgeting is an analysis of the expenditures specifically earmarked for women but also an analysis of the entire budget from a gender perspective to ensure they respond to the needs of both women and men.

Adversarial Environment

117. The Committee considered the significant number of submissions from stakeholders which recommended that the Assembly should take steps to address what they considered to be the adversarial culture prevalent in the Assembly.
118. At the Committee meeting of 25 November 2014, a representative from the **DUP** reminded the Committee that the Assembly was a political institution and that at some stage adversarial politics had to take place and *“that the Chamber should not be stifled any more than it is.”* The DUP representative stated that women were not inferior and were as capable as their male counterparts in dealing with this.
119. **Sinn Féin** considered that women may be able for the adversarial nature of politics in the Assembly but that they should not have to deal with it and that it is off-putting for many women. **Sinn Féin** accepted that although politics could be adversarial in nature they considered that when there was evidence of improper conduct this should be appropriately challenged by the Assembly and Speaker. As noted in its written submission, **Sinn Féin** *“takes a very strong stand in challenging sexism and misogyny whether it is internal to the party or externally. Sinn Féin believe that there should be a zero tolerance approach to sexism in public life.”*
120. The **SDLP** in their written submission considered that *“gender equality should be included within the Assembly’s code of conduct and there should be zero tolerance of sexist comments/ actions in the chamber or at committee meetings.”*
121. This view was echoed by the **Alliance Party** who in its written submission stated that *“Alliance believes that the conduct and procedures in the Assembly could be off-putting to women and could be reviewed.”*
122. At the Committee meeting of 25 November 2014, representatives from the **DUP** and the **Alliance Party** also highlighted the problem of the media’s selective coverage of the work of the Assembly debates which focuses on the adversarial aspects as opposed to the good work which takes place in many debates and Committee meetings on a daily basis.
123. The Committee noted that the Assembly’s Committee on Standards and Privileges is currently undertaking a review of the Code of Conduct for Members of the NI Assembly. At the Committee meeting of 9 December 2014, the Committee agreed that it would write to the Committee on Standards and Privileges to seek information on whether gender was considered when defining the behaviour expected of Members in the new Code of Conduct.
124. The Committee noted the response from the Committee on Standards and Privileges at its meeting of 13 January 2015. In its response, the Committee on Standards and Privileges noted that it is currently reviewing the Assembly’s Code of Conduct. It noted that *“the review is not yet complete but the Committee nonetheless expects the new Code to include aspirational principles of conduct in relation to Equality and Good Working Relations. The definition of these principles is likely to make specific reference to gender.”*

Assembly Sitting Times

125. The Committee acknowledged that a number of stakeholders had called for the Assembly to review its sitting times to ensure a work-life balance for its members. The Committee

considered a number of options for reviewing the sitting times and arrangements for voting at the Assembly during its meetings on 4 and 25 November 2014.

126. At its meeting of 4 November 2014, the Committee noted the sitting times of a number of other legislatures including the Swedish, Icelandic, Scottish and Irish national assemblies. The Committee also noted the work undertaken by the Assembly's Committee on Procedures which had recommended no change to the existing sitting times in the Assembly.
127. The Committee also discussed the conclusions of an Inquiry by the Assembly's Committee on Procedures into the 'Introduction of Electronic Voting into the Northern Ireland Assembly Chamber' (2007). The Report recommended that an electronic voting system should not be installed in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee on Procedures had reviewed its own report on the matter at its meeting of 24 June 2014 and concluded *"Having considered information and cost options to introduce electronic voting in the Chamber, it was agreed not to propose any changes to the current system of voting. It was also agreed not to consider this issue again for the duration of the mandate."*
128. During deliberations at the Committee meeting of 25 November 2014, the representative of the **UUP** considered that there was merit in asking the Committee on Procedures to reconsider their decision and to reconsider the potential for implementing an electronic voting system in the Assembly.
129. During the meetings of 4 and 25 November 2014, family friendly provisions in relation to the arrangements for sitting times and voting times in the Swedish Riksdag and the Northern Ireland Assembly were discussed. The Committee heard that both Swedish and Scottish legislatures have allocated times for voting and considered that the introduction of a set time for voting particularly when there are multiple votes is an initiative that the Northern Ireland Assembly should consider.
130. During the meeting of 25 November 2014, the Committee also considered the deferred voting mechanism as used at Westminster as a possible initiative that the Assembly could introduce to facilitate family friendly sittings. A representative from the **DUP** who is also a sitting MP noted that the deferred voting mechanism is *"useful device which is used regularly at Westminster."* Under the deferred voting mechanism, votes could be deferred until the next sitting day thereby eliminating the need for late sittings.
131. A representative from the **Alliance Party** also suggested that in the event of an opposition being established during the next mandate the Assembly should further explore whether the "pairing system" could be adopted in the Assembly as it is currently used in Westminster. Pairing is a parliamentary practice whereby two members of parliament from opposing political parties may agree to abstain where one member is unable to vote, due to other commitments, illness, travel problems, etc.

Job Sharing

132. A number of submissions recommended that political parties and the Assembly should consider the introduction of job-sharing for MLAs. The Committee considered this concept at its meetings of 4 and 25 November 2014.
133. In its written submission to the Committee **Sinn Féin** indicated that it supports family friendly hours and would be open to looking at job sharing for elected representatives.
134. During Committee deliberations 25 November 2014, the Committee noted that job sharing is an excepted matter under Schedule 2 of the Northern Ireland Act and that previous attempts to introduce this in Scotland had not succeeded. A representative from **Sinn Féin** noted that job sharing is an attractive option for MLAs at all stages of their career and considered that the Committee should recommend that the Executive consider engaging with Westminster to allow legislation to be brought in.

135. The representative from the **UUP** expressed concern about how the concept of job-sharing would work in practice and expressed unease that it would be political parties and not the electorate who would be deciding who would represent them. The **UUP** representative indicated that further clarity would be required as to how this measure would work in practice in Northern Ireland.

Childcare Support

136. The Committee considered the recommendations from a number of stakeholders for on-site childcare facilities as a means of supporting members with childcare responsibilities. The Committee noted that the Assembly currently does provide some childcare support to its Members in the form of financial assistance. The **UUP representative** considered that this support should continue to be provided but considered that it would be worth reviewing the suitability of the current arrangements before recommending the introduction of onsite childcare facilities. Representatives from **Sinn Féin** and the **DUP** did highlight the need for suitable provisions including the provision of breastfeeding facilities for members who had to return to work early from their maternity leave. At its meeting of 17 February 2015 the Committee noted that, in September 2014, the Northern Ireland Assembly agreed to join the Public Health Agency's 'Breastfeeding welcome here' scheme.
137. The **SDLP** in their submission stated that *"the Assembly needs to develop member support systems in regards to adequate childcare provision, flexible working hours and skills training. Support systems are necessary to both male and female politicians and as such the assembly should implement such family friendly policies."*

Candidate Selection

138. A number of submissions encouraged political parties to make greater use of the provisions of the Sex Discrimination (Selection of Candidates) Act 2002 to ensure greater gender equality in the Northern Ireland Assembly. This Act amends the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provisions of the Order. This provision has been extended to 2030.
139. It was stressed that this piece of legislation would allow political parties to take special steps to ensure that more women are being put forward for election without resorting to the use of quotas by creating all women candidate shortlists. This could include using all women shortlists to fill vacant seats or at least guaranteeing a percentage of these seats for women. A number of stakeholders recommended that the Assembly also may have a role to play in encouraging parties to make use of those provisions.
140. In their written submissions to the Committee, the six political parties who responded to the Call for Evidence indicated their support and provided evidence of measures aimed at increasing the number of female candidates.
141. The **DUP** in its submission stated that *"in the 2011 Assembly elections the DUP selected five constituencies that they believed had winnable seats and placed Women to run resulting in three extra Women being elected."*
142. **Sinn Féin** stated that it proactively approaches and encourages women to stand in local council, MLA, TD, MEP and for party positions. The party noted that its vice-president is a woman, its Chief Whip in the Assembly is a woman, its three Ministerial posts are held by women; and its Ard Rúnaí is a woman. The party further noted that 9 out of 29 MLAs are women; 1 out of 5 MPs are women; and that 3 out of the 4 MEP positions are held by women.

143. The **UUP** in its submission stated that they *“have been actively supporting female members to increase their representation and encouraging more to put themselves forward for selection and election.”*
144. In its written submission, the **Alliance Party** indicated that it has *“made a proactive approach to encouraging women to stand.”* The party has also established a women’s section to ensure that there is available support to women who wish to stand.
145. The **SDLP** in its submission stated that *“The SDLP actively sought and targeted women to run for election in the 2014 local elections. Attention was particularly paid to areas where there were winnable seats. As a result 35% of the local election candidates were women and 40% of those elected for the SDLP are women.”* Furthermore it was noted that the party’s constitution *“encourages gender balance with Clause 19.8 directing each District Executive to take all practical steps to ensure a gender balance if there are two or more candidates.”*
146. The **Green Party (NI)** in its submission to the Committee provided a copy of their new policy ‘The Women’s Involvement Strategy’ which aims to increase the involvement of women in the Green Party in Northern Ireland. The Strategy includes a range of measures including the provision of training and support and the adoption of a mixture of targets and quotas to support structural change.
147. During Committee deliberations at the meeting of 25 November 2014, a representative from the **DUP** recognised that unless steps are taken the Assembly will not succeed in increasing female representation.
148. The representative from the **Alliance Party** considered that if political parties cannot be persuaded to change their attitude and to accept some form of compulsion in respect of candidate selection then the Assembly will not succeed in increasing female representation, *“there will still be male dominated parties largely choosing men”*. The **Alliance Party** representative suggested that the Committee should look at cross-party recommendations to address the barriers facing women at candidate selection.
149. The **UUP** representative recognised that *all* political parties *“must do more to ensure that the Assembly better reflects society but that the issue of mandatory candidate selection is a party decision.”*
150. A representative from **Sinn Féin** indicated that decisive action was required and that voluntary quotas would not succeed in increasing the number of women in the short-term and as a result the party would support the introduction of mandatory quotas.
151. The **SDLP** in its written submission considered that the *“adoption of quota systems and all women candidate lists needs to be further assessed and developed in conjunction with positive discrimination to initially develop the amount of women running in local elections.”*
152. In its submission **Sinn Féin** also put forward a number of additional proposals aimed at increasing the percentage of women selected including the use of list. A **Sinn Féin** representative spoke about the positive impact of using all men and all women lists at the party Ard Fheis (annual party conference) and Ard Chomhairle (National Executive).
153. The **Alliance Party** representative also expressed support for the use of all women shortlists as used in Iceland on a voluntary as a possible option for increasing the female representation in the Assembly.
154. A representative from the **DUP** also recognised that the use of all women shortlists by the Labour party in previous Westminster elections had contributed to a significant rise in the number of female MPs. A representative from the DUP noted that, in his personal experience, the use of all women shortlists had led to some concerns within the Labour party.
155. The Committee also considered the recent legislation introduced in the Republic of Ireland. Section 42 of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 provides for the

financial punishment of political parties that do not have 30% of either sex standing as candidates in the next election, and 40% of either sex in any election after seven years from the first election.

156. In its submission to the Committee, the **SDLP** recognised *“the use of “twinning” constituencies in Wales and Scotland as a useful and successful way of increasing the amount of women being selected to run for election.”* Twinning is the practice of parties selecting candidates in constituencies in tandem, one female and one male. It is contingent on an appropriate party mechanism, such as centralised candidate selection or agreements between local party offices to twin.
157. At its meeting of 4 November 2014, the Committee had requested additional research on the applicability of twinning as a possible mechanism for increasing women’s participation in politics. The paper produced by the Assembly Research and Information Services (NIAR 759-14) noted that *“Elections using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system in Northern Ireland could use ‘twinning’ by arranging candidate selection agreements between constituencies to pair male and female candidates. However it further noted that the success of the twinning as a mechanism to increase the number of women elected to a legislature is dependent on the female candidate in the ‘twinning’ arrangement standing in a winnable seat.”*

Incumbency and filling of co-opted seats

158. The representative from the **Alliance Party** highlighted research that has shown that in the past the vast majority of incumbents are male. In particular, it was noted that between 2007 and 2011 there were 14 co-options in the Assembly, including into 3 seats previously held by women. All 14 vacancies were filled by co-opting men.
159. The representative from the **Alliance Party** suggested that parties may wish to look at how they fill co-opted seats to ensure greater female representation – for example filling a co-opted seat with a Member from the opposite sex.

Promotion of Female MLAs

160. During Committee deliberations on 25 November 2014, representatives from the **Alliance Party** and **Sinn Féin** also spoke about the need for political parties to consider how in the future they could collectively ensure that gender is taken into account when filling high profile positions, including that of Speaker and Deputy Speaker.
161. In its submission, the **SDLP** recognised *“the potential of gender quotas and believe quotas could be further used to address gender imbalance in regards ministerial, committee chairpersons and departmental spokesperson appointments.”*
162. The **Alliance Party** in its submission noted that the party has had and continues to have several high profile women in the Assembly including the first (and so far only) female Speaker.
163. In its submission **Sinn Féin** noted that its three Ministerial positions in the Executive are women and that a woman also holds the party chief whip position in the Assembly.

Female Representation in Public Appointments

164. At the meetings of 4 and 25 November 2014 and 9 December 2014, the Committee considered the issue of female representation in public boards. A number of written submissions received by the Committee under the ‘Call for Evidence’ stressed the lack of women holding public appointments in Northern Ireland.

165. Representatives from **Sinn Féin** and the **UUP** expressed support for the introduction of quotas in public boards and in particular the principle of a run-in period to achieve a 40% gender target on public boards. A representative from **Sinn Féin** also considered whether companies tendering for public contracts should adhere to gender quotas.
166. The **SDLP** in their its submission also considered that *“all parties should seek to increase recognition at all levels of society the importance of gender-balanced representation in political and public decision making to ensure that qualified women are nominated to membership in public bodies and offices.”*

Support and profiling the work of existing MLAs

167. At the Committee meeting of 25 November 2014, a **DUP** representative indicated support for a number of initiatives aimed at promoting the role of existing female politicians and outlined the work undertaken by the All Party group on UN Security Resolution 1325 to mark International Women’s Day.
168. The **SDLP** in its written submission considered that *“political parties need to show a significant commitment to ending gender discrimination and to enhancing the role of women already active in politics.”*

Engagement and Outreach to Encourage More Women into Politics

169. The Committee also considered work of the Assembly Engagement and Outreach unit in engaging the public in the work of the Assembly. The Committee expressed support for greater engagement with young women particularly in disadvantaged areas. The Committee agreed with the recommendation that political parties in the Assembly should put an emphasis on recruiting more women as either activists or at local government level.
170. During deliberations at the Committee meeting of 25 November 2014, the representative from the **UUP** also expressed support for a pathway into political life. Representatives from the **DUP** and the **UUP** also stressed the need to encourage more people, particularly young people to engage in all levels of the politics, from community activism right through to political activism before deciding on a career in political life.
171. In its written submission, the **DUP** noted that the party is *“actively working within communities through their engagement with the Voluntary and Community sector. Female and male representatives participate regularly in events to promote female participation at all levels of government.”*
172. As noted by the **SDLP** in its submission *“political parties and the Assembly need to develop successful women shadowing and mentoring initiatives in order to encourage young women into engaging with politics.”*
173. This view was supported by the **Alliance Party** in its written submission to the Committee which stated that *“a form of mentoring scheme, within political parties, would be appropriate. However this must include at a local government level as well, because there is a need to ensure women progress through the party.”*

Challenging Gender Stereotypes

174. The Committee considered the need for the Assembly to more actively engage with the media to profile the work undertaken by female MLAs to help demystify the work of Assembly and encourage other women to consider a career in politics. In its written submission, the **DUP** stated: *“We believe that some work could be undertaken by the Assembly along with the media to identify specific issues were they can work together to tackle the gender stereotypes*

of politics and also women in leadership roles in general. This would assist in profiling women within the Assembly and would encourage other Women to see Politics as a serious career choice."

175. This view was echoed by the **SDLP** in its submission which stated that *"parties need to challenge negative gender stereotyping and promote positive shifts in culture through raising awareness of the challenges faced by women in politics and the positive contribution full equality will have on politics."* It considered that in order *"to make a significant and lasting change to Northern Ireland political parties need to set down initiatives aimed at changing our cultural views on women at a political and societal level."*
176. The **UUP** in its written submission to the Committee also considered that *"the media should be encouraged to highlight positive female role models."*

Capacity Building Programmes

177. A strong theme which emerged in the written and oral evidence received by the Committee was the need to provide leadership development programmes to support existing and aspiring female politicians. It was considered that this initiative could be undertaken in conjunction with civil society organisations that already provide a range of these programmes.
178. The **DUP** its written submission and at the Committee meetings of 25 November 2014 and 9 December 2014, recognised the valuable contribution of external training providers in encouraging women to consider a career in politics and in promoting the advancement of women in politics.
179. The **UUP** in its written submission recommended *"the provision of training and support programmes to encourage and increase the skills and confidence of prospective female candidates."*
180. The **UUP** provided details of the Party's *"Dame Dehra Parker Programme which has successfully developed the skills and increased the confidence of female members."* However, the party *"recognise that further work needs to be done and are committed to building on the good work that has already been done."*
181. The **SDLP** in its written submission considered that *"parties should continue to provide proper training and support programmes for women in order to enhance the skills and confidence of both newly elected and veteran politicians."*

Conclusions and Recommendations

182. Northern Ireland has one of the lowest levels of female representation of devolved and national legislatures in the UK and Ireland. If placed in international legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th out of 189 countries in the world. The Committee concluded that the under representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland is a serious issue which must be addressed as a matter of urgency.
183. The Committee considered the evidence presented to the Committee which highlighted that the institutional environment of the Assembly and political parties' candidate selection process need to be reviewed to make it easier for women to both seek election to and succeed as a member of the NI Assembly.
184. The Committee concluded that the Assembly and political parties play a key role in encouraging women to seek and secure election to the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee considered a number of positive measures which could be introduced by political parties to increase the number of women both seeking and securing election to the Northern Ireland Assembly.
185. The Committee considered the evidence regarding the lack of engagement by young women in politics in Northern Ireland. The Committee concluded that civil society and the education sector have an important contribution to make in encouraging women to consider a career in politics.
186. The Committee recognised the cross-cutting factors which the evidence suggests have contributed to society's perception of women as the primary caregivers. The Committee concluded that the Executive strategies if designed, delivered and appropriately funded can enable women at all levels of society to balance their caring responsibilities with a career in politics.
187. The Committee considered the numerous submissions in relation to the media's portrayal of female politicians. The Committee concluded that the media plays an important role in informing society's views about the work of female politicians and the contribution they make to political life in Northern Ireland.

Addressing Gender Imbalance within Political Parties

188. The Committee recognised that there is a need to encourage more women to get involved in politics and to join political parties to increase the number of female members from which potential candidates can be selected for Assembly and local elections. **The Committee recommended that political parties should consider developing targeted membership strategies to encourage more women to get involved and become members of their parties (Recommendation 1).**
189. The Committee considered a number of initiatives and programmes which have proved successful in addressing the political gender imbalance. This included work to profile female politicians as role models which has been found to be an effective stimulus to foster women's interest and attachment to politics. **The Committee recognised that high profile female MLAs can act as positive role models and recommended that political parties should take this into account when making political appointments in the Assembly. (Recommendation 2).**
190. The Committee heard about mentoring programmes in other legislatures which have been successful in mobilising women in wider civil society to consider political careers, to join political parties and to develop the skills required for campaigning. **The Committee recommended that political parties should strive to develop mentoring programmes for aspiring politicians both at local government and within the Assembly (Recommendation 3).**

191. The Committee agreed with the evidence received which stressed the importance of strong party leadership and support for gender equality measures and initiatives introduced by political parties. **The Committee recommended that initiatives designed to increase female candidacies are widely known and extensively promoted within a party, are given strong positive and public support by the party leadership and are communicated to supporters (Recommendation 4).**
192. The Committee acknowledged the evidence which stressed the need to promote female party members, particularly those in high profile or senior positions, in the media in order to challenge the existing gender stereotypes. **The Committee recommended that political parties review their internal media strategy to ensure greater visibility of female politicians (Recommendation 5).**
193. On the issue of candidate selection, **the Committee recommended that if not already provided, political parties should consider the introduction of diversity awareness training, advice and support available to party members involved in the candidate selection process (Recommendation 6).**
194. The Committee acknowledged the evidence which called on political parties to address the bottleneck that exists in the candidate selection process. Assembly Research paper (NIAR 570-013) provided to the Committee noted that *“the representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.”* **The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider the introduction of measures to increase the number of female candidates being put forward for election. However, the Committee recognised that the decision on which, if any, measures to introduce remained a decision for the political parties (Recommendation 7).**
195. As part of its discussion the Committee considered a range of measures which political parties may wish to consider introducing. This included the introduction of quotas as a temporary measure to increase the number of female candidates. The Committee considered, but there was no consensus, on the introduction of mandatory quotas. Sinn Féin expressed its strong support for the introduction of quotas and recommended that consideration be given to the introduction of legislation similar to that introduced by Dáil Éireann in 2012 whereby political parties face financial penalties if they do not meet the target quota in the agreed timescale. Some Members of the Committee considered that the financial penalties could only be introduced once political parties had all signed up to the introduction of quotas on which there was no agreement at present.
196. The Committee did agree however that political parties may wish to consider the introduction of all women shortlists and twinning in selected constituencies. The Committee did recognise that the practice of twinning was contingent on an appropriate party mechanism, such as centralised candidate selection or agreements between local party offices to win. Twinning is the practice of parties selecting candidates in constituencies in tandem – for example a male candidate in one constituency and a female candidate in the other constituency.
197. The Committee agreed that political parties may wish to consider reviewing their strategies for filling co-opted seats. The Committee considered a range of options which parties could consider introducing to fill co-opted seats in future. These included the use of all-women shortlists; filling vacant seats with a member of the opposite sex; seats for women candidates only; and the zipping system so that at least every other co-opted seat is filled by a female candidate.
198. In consideration of this matter, the Committee did recognise that elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are an excepted matter under Schedule 2 of the NI Act 1998 and that the Committee had agreed that electoral systems/models would be outside the scope of this review when it agreed the Terms of Reference on 24 June 2014.

199. The Committee considered provisions, not yet in force, aimed at requiring political parties to collect and publish anonymized diversity data on candidates. The Committee noted that the Electoral Commission currently does not provide a gender breakdown of candidates, nor is there a requirement for the Commission to do so. **The Committee recommended that political parties may wish to consider collecting and publishing anonymized diversity data on candidates. (Recommendation 8).**
200. **The Committee did consider but could not agree on job sharing in political office.** A number of members of the Committee expressed concern about how this work in practice and the lack of evidence on job-sharing in politics from other jurisdictions. Sinn Féin expressed its support for this measure as a means of supporting women, particularly those who have or are about to have children, but also as a gender friendly measure for all MLAs.
201. **The Committee recommended that if not already in place, political parties should develop policies relating to maternity and paternity leave for politicians and party staff (Recommendation 9).**
202. **The Committee recommended that political parties should develop procedures for dealing sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying if these are not already in place (Recommendation 10).**

Creating a Gender Sensitive Parliament

203. There is a consensus that the Assembly has a key role to play in encouraging women to seek and continue a career in politics in Northern Ireland. The Committee recognises that the Assembly is currently undertaking a lot of positive work to engage and educate more young people and in particular young women on the work of the Assembly. **The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to engage with young women and school girls to discover why they are not engaging in political life and what positive initiatives could be brought forward as a result (Recommendation 11).**
204. Following its review of the evidence and visits to other legislatures, the Committee considers that there are a number of important positive initiatives which the Assembly could introduce to both encourage and support female politicians. The Committee believes that the Assembly could learn from the experience of other legislatures on how to create a gender sensitive parliament.
205. In particular the Committee looked at the work of the Local Government Staff Commission NI in conjunction with the Equality Commission NI in developing the 'Women in Local Councils' initiative. In its visit to the Welsh Assembly, the Committee also heard about the 'Women in Public Life' campaign which was introduced in 2012 by the Presiding Officer for the National Assembly for Wales, Dame Rosemary Butler, to encourage more women into public life for the 2016 elections. The Committee also considered the 15 point action plan on creating a gender sensitive parliament which was developed by the Swedish Riksdag. In light of the success of these initiatives, **the Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider adopting measures from local, national and international best practice to create a gender sensitive Northern Ireland Assembly (Recommendation 12).**
206. As with political parties, **the Committee recommended that all initiatives designed to increase and support women in the Northern Ireland Assembly should be given strong support from the Assembly leadership (Recommendation 13).** Furthermore **the Committee recommended that where possible, the Assembly should consider how it can support political parties in implementing the recommendations from this Review (Recommendation 14).**
207. To facilitate this work **the Committee recommended that the Assembly should establish a working group on a gender sensitive parliament. The working group should have equal membership of male and female MLAs. (Recommendation 15)** The Committee also

- recommended that the Assembly should conduct a gender survey across all members to identify the key barriers and challenges and, based on the feedback received, develop a specific gender action plan with specific measures to help members balance family life with their political career (Recommendation 16).**
208. In particular, **the Committee recommended that the Assembly should undertake a review of voting mechanisms used in other legislatures as a means of facilitating family friendly sittings (Recommendation 17).** The Committee considered that the Assembly could consider introducing allocated voting times as currently used in Scotland or the deferred voting mechanism as it currently operates in Westminster. In light of the recent Stormont House Agreement on the introduction of an opposition, the Committee also considered that this review of voting mechanisms should also take into account the ‘pairing system’ which operates in Westminster.
209. **The Committee recognised that it was important to capture the experience of aspiring female politicians and therefore the Committee recommended that following the next Assembly elections, the Assembly should carry out an anonymous survey of all candidates to identify the barriers and challenges they encountered (Recommendation 18).**
210. The Committee recognised that numerous submissions referred to the adversarial nature of the Assembly as being a key barrier to women seeking election to the Assembly. The Committee noted that a new Assembly Code of Conduct is expected shortly and it is anticipated that this new Code will include aspirational principles of conduct in relation to Equality and Good Working Relations and that the definition of these principles is likely to include gender.
211. The Committee considered the evidence on the importance of dedicated training programmes for both aspiring and existing female politicians. The Committee recognised the work being undertaken by Politics Plus in developing the ‘Women in Politics’ programme which is designed to equip female MLAs with the necessary skills and confidence to succeed in the Northern Ireland Assembly. **The Committee recommended that the Assembly should continue to develop and deliver training and capacity building programmes to assist female MLAs in carrying out their role as elected public representatives (Recommendation 19).**
212. **The Committee considered evidence which stressed the importance of profiling female politicians as role models. The Committee concluded that civil society and the education sector have an important contribution to make in encouraging women to consider a career in politics. The Committee also recognised that political parties and female politicians had a key role to play in this regard but the Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider targeted engagement with the media, civil society and schools to profile the work of female MLAs (Recommendation 20).**
213. **The Committee recommended that the Assembly should consider hosting at least one annual event to highlight the work of female politicians this could coincide with either International Women’s Day or during Parliamentary Week (Recommendation 21).**
214. **The Committee recommended that the Assembly should ensure, where possible, gender representation be considered when agreeing official delegations from the Assembly (Recommendation 22).**
215. Based on the evidence received on the success of women’s caucuses and networks in other legislatures, **the Committee also recommended that the Assembly should facilitate the creation of a women’s parliamentary caucus (Recommendation 23).** The establishment of this caucus could facilitate the development of cross parliamentary networks with female politicians in other legislatures.
216. Finally, the Committee considered a number of measures which the Assembly could undertake to gender proof its scrutiny of all Executive legislation and policy. **The Committee considered but had reservations about the introduction of gender analysis of witnesses**

appearing before Assembly committees. Representatives from the DUP, UUP and Alliance Party expressed concern about how this measure would work in practice and recognised that Executive departments and external stakeholders retain the right to appoint witnesses as they see fit. Sinn Féin and the SDLP expressed their strong support for this measure. Sinn Féin further considered that the failure to carry out gender analysis of witnesses leaves a gap in identifying gender inequalities.

217. **The Committee also recommended that the Assembly through its Research and Information Service should assist Committees to undertake gender based analysis of public policies and budgets (Recommendation 24).**

Addressing Gender Imbalance in Government Policy and Strategy

218. During the course of this Review, the Committee heard from numerous stakeholders that society's perception of women as the primary carers and the lack of affordable and flexible childcare have led to many women putting their careers on hold and not consider a career in politics. Stakeholders stressed the need for the Executive to develop and implement fundamental social policies that would help women into politics and into the labour market.
219. The publication and implementation of a new gender equality strategy and a childcare strategy for Northern Ireland were considered pivotal to achieving this. Through its engagement with key stakeholders at its Inquiry event on 23 October 2014, the Committee heard about the need for the Executive to develop and publish a revised gender equality strategy by 2016. **The Committee recommended that the Executive should ensure that its future childcare and gender equality strategies are designed, delivered and appropriately funded to enable women at all levels of society to balance their caring responsibilities with a career in politics (Recommendation 25).**
220. Furthermore, **the Committee recommended that the Executive should ensure improved information sharing, monitoring and accountability in the implementation of the new gender equality strategy across all departments to ensure that all strategic objectives are met within the agreed timescales and that lessons are learned from the implementation of the existing Gender Equality Strategy (2006-2016) (Recommendation 26).** The Committee agreed that this would require leadership and public commitment from all Executive Ministers. **The Committee recommended that Executive Ministers should state their commitment to addressing gender inequality in Northern Ireland (Recommendation 27).**
221. The Committee recognised the cross-cutting factors which the evidence suggests have contributed to society's perception of women as the primary caregivers. **The Committee recommended that consideration be given to the implementation of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in Executive policies and legislation development** provided for in the current Gender Equality Strategy (2006-2016) **(Recommendation 28).** The Committee recognised that gender mainstreaming has already been provided for in the current Gender Equality Strategy (2006-2016) but has not been implemented.
222. On the under-representation of women in public life, the Committee considered calls from stakeholders to remove the barriers facing women not just in politics but also in public appointments. Although "representation in public life/decision-making" is one of the key actions in the current Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland (2006-2016) research figures presented to the Committee indicated that the Executive has some way to go to meet its strategic objective to achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies. **The Committee recommended that the Executive should take steps to increase the diversity of public bodies and in particular introduce measures to address the gender imbalance in public appointments in Northern Ireland (Recommendation 29).**

Glossary of Terms

Gender Audit	A “gender audit” is one aspect of what is referred to as “mainstreaming”- analysing mainstream public policy, including legislation, regulations, allocations, taxation and social projects, from the point of view of their effect on the status of women in a given society. Gender audits analyse the income and expenditures of the government from a gender perspective. The basic assumption of gender audits is that public policy impacts differently on men and women. The variance stems from the different roles of women and men in the family and from the lower economic status of women. The purpose of gender audits is to lead to changes in public policy that contribute to an increase in gender equality.
Gender Budgeting	Gender budgeting is part of the gender mainstreaming strategy. Gender budgeting focuses on a gender-based analysis and an equality-oriented evaluation of the distribution of resources. These resources are mainly money, time as well as paid and/or unpaid work. Gender budgeting seeks to achieve a gender-equal distribution of resources.
Gender Disaggregated Statistics	Gender Disaggregated statistics and data gathered and analysed on the basis of sex.
Gender Mainstreaming	Gender mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects.
Gender Proofing	Gender Proofing (GP) is the means by which it is ensured that all policies and practices within organisations have equally beneficial effects on men and women. It recognises that differences exist in men’s and women’s lives and therefore our needs, experiences and priorities are different.
Gender Sensitive	Gender sensitivity is understanding the socio-cultural factors underlying sex-based discrimination. The term also applies to attitudes that socialise girls and boys into certain behaviours or opportunities. Gender-sensitive planning uses specific methods and tools to provide women and girls more opportunities for their participation in the development process and to measure the impact of planned activities on women and men.
Gender Social Norms	Gender social norms are rules that society attributes to a particular sex about behaviour that reflects prevailing cultural values and are backed by sanctions – either formal or informal. They are about what a group deems to be good, proper, acceptable or bad.
Positive Action	The term ‘positive action’ refers to a number of methods designed to counteract the effects of past discrimination and to help abolish stereotyping.
Positive Measures	Positive measures can be policy designed to redress past discrimination against women and minority groups through measures to improve their political, economic and educational opportunities.
Twinning System	Select two districts according to geography and ‘winnability’ and then select a woman as the candidate for one of the constituencies and a man as the candidate for the other.
Voluntary Quotas	This involve a party committing itself to nominating a certain percentage of female candidates for electoral lists.
Zippering System	According to this system women and men are alternated on the electoral ballots.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 1

Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday 8 April 2014, Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Paul Givan
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Raymond McCartney
Mr Seán Rogers
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Pat Sheehan

Apologies: Mr Alex Attwood

In Attendance: Mr John Simmons (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

10.32am The meeting opened in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr. Alex Attwood

2. Minutes of the last meeting

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 25 March 2014.

3. Matters Arising

Topics for Committee's Future Work Programme

Members noted that letters have been sent to Party Leaders of the Assembly requesting an update their preference(s) on topics for the Committee's future work programme.

4. Initial Consideration of Topic of Committee's Next Review

Agreed: To move into closed session

10.40am The Committee moved into closed session.

The Committee discussed topics for the Committee's next Review.

Agreed: The topic of the Committee's next Review will be Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Agreed: At the Committee's next meeting to take briefings from Professor Yvonne Galligan from Queen's University Belfast and Assembly Research on this topic.

Agreed: To request Assembly Research for a breakdown of female representatives in Local Councils in England, Scotland and Wales in comparison to Northern Ireland from 1998-2012.

Agreed: To request Assembly Research for the outcome by gender breakdown of the Northern Ireland's May 2014 Local Government elections once available.

Agreed: To take a briefing at a future Committee meeting from the Assembly's All Party Group on UNSCR 1325.

10.56am The Committee moved into open session.

10.57am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

{EXTRACT}

Tuesday 6 May 2014, Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Raymond McCartney

Apologies: Mr. Alex Attwood
Mr. Roy Beggs
Mr. Paul Givan
Mr. Séan Rogers
Ms Caitríona Ruane

In Attendance: Mr John Simmons (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Michael Potter (Research Officer)

In the absence of the Chairperson at the start of the meeting, the meeting was chaired by the Deputy Chairperson.

10.45am The meeting opened in public session.

4. **Briefing by Assembly Research and Information Service – Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly**

10.46am Research Officer joined the meeting.

10.54am Stephen Moutray joined the meeting.

Members received an oral briefing from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Services on a paper on Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Key issues discussed included an update paper on the Welsh Assembly and candidates by gender for the 2014 Local Government elections in Northern Ireland.

The Research Officer agreed to provide further information to Members on a number of issues.

11.15am Research Officer left the meeting.

5. **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Approach to the Review**

Agreed: To move into closed session.

11.15am The Committee moved into closed session.

Members noted the proposed approach to the Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Agreed: The content of the proposed programme for the way forward for the Review.

Agreed: A visit to a relevant legislature as part of the scoping stage of the Review.

11.38am The Committee moved into open session.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson advised Members that the purpose of this agenda item was for Members to consider the meetings scheduled for the Committee's new Review topic.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Forward Work Programme as drafted.

11.39am The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Pat Sheehan, Deputy Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

{EXTRACT}

Tuesday 27 May 2014, Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present:	Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson) Mr. Roy Beggs Ms Paula Bradley Mr Gregory Campbell Mr. Séan Rogers Ms Caitríona Ruane
Apologies:	Mr. Alex Attwood Mr. Stephen Moutray Mr. Raymond McCartney Mr. Trevor Lunn
In Attendance:	Mr John Simmons (Assembly Clerk) Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk) Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

In the absence of the Chairperson the meeting was chaired by the Deputy Chairperson.

10.38am The meeting opened in public session.

3. **Matters Arising**

Members noted correspondence received from the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly endorsing the Committee's Review 'Women in Politics and the NI Assembly' and the Committee's immediate plan to visit the National Assembly for Wales as part of this Review.

10.42am Roy Beggs joined the meeting.

4. **Briefing from the All Party Group on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 – Women, Peace and Security**

10.45am Witnesses joined the meeting.

Members received an oral briefing from Paula Bradley MLA, Chairperson of the All Party Group (APG) on the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and Dr. Ann Marie Gray, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, Secretariat to the All Party Group.

Key issues discussed included implementation of the principles of UNSCR 1325, the role of women in peace building, challenges and barriers for women entering politics and an update on the APGs Westminster Inquiry.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their presentation and discussion which followed.

11.10am Witnesses concluded.

5. **Visit to the National Assembly for Wales**

Agreed: The programme drafted for the visit to the National Assembly for Wales on the 4-5 June 2014.

11.17am Caitríona Ruane left the meeting.

11.21am Caitríona Ruane rejoined the meeting.

6. Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Approach to the Review

Members noted a number of draft papers for discussion including the Terms of Reference, a draft 'Call for Evidence' paper, the list of key stakeholders to be invited to respond to it and another list of potential witnesses to provide oral evidence to the Committee.

Agreed: To discuss the papers (updated as necessary) further at the next meeting

11.28am Sean Rogers left the meeting.

Agreed: To ask the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Services for a comparative breakdown of nominations of successful women candidates in the recent Northern Ireland elections, including electoral boundaries within the United Kingdom and Ireland. To ask the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service for a comparative breakdown of women candidates in the recent Northern Ireland elections by success, Party, Ward and North and South.

11.41am The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Pat Sheehan, Deputy Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

{EXTRACT}

Tuesday 24 June 2014, Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Paul Givan
Mr Raymond McCartney
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Pat Sheehan

In Attendance: Mr John Simmons (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

10.33 am The meeting opened in public session.

4. Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly: Briefing from Professor Yvonne Galligan, Queen's University Belfast

Members considered a presentation and papers from Professor Yvonne Galligan which focused on models of good practice and actions by other legislatures who had successfully increased the number of women in politics. Key issues discussed included barriers for women, cross party 'space' and producing gender sensitive information.

10.56am Mr. Paul Givan joined the meeting.

11.01am Mr. Séan Rogers left the meeting.

11.03am Ms Paula Bradley left the meeting.

11.04am Mr Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

Agreed: Professor Galligan to provide further information on women and politics in the Republic of Ireland.

11.11am Professor Galligan left the meeting.

5. Vist to the National Assembly for Wales

Members considered the draft report on the Committee's visit to the National Assembly for Wales. The Chairperson acknowledged the support of the Presiding Officer and her team throughout the visit.

Agreed: To make a minor change to the draft Report on one action to be considered by Parties of the Assembly.

Agreed: To prepare a programme for a visit to Sweden in September 2014 as part of the Review.

11.20am Mr. Gregory Campbell left the meeting.

6. Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Approach to the Review

Members considered the draft Terms of Reference, the draft Call for Evidence paper, the draft List of Key Stakeholders to be considered to be invited to respond to Call for Evidence and draft List of Key Stakeholders to be invited to give oral evidence.

Agreed: The draft Terms of Reference.

Agreed: The draft Call for Evidence paper and to advertise this in the local press.

Agreed: The draft list of Key Stakeholders to be considered to be invited to respond to Call for Evidence and include the Northern Ireland Local Government Association.

Agreed: The draft lists of key Stakeholders to be invited to give oral evidence.

Agreed: At the first meeting after recess to invite the Women's Resource and Development Agency and a former MLA to give oral evidence on barriers and challenges to women in politics.

Members noted a paper prepared by Assembly Research on Local Election 2014: Results by Party and Gender.

11.28am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

{EXTRACT}

Tuesday 10 September 2014, Room 21, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Raymond McCartney
Mr Seán Rogers
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Pat Sheehan

Apologies: None.

In Attendance: Mr John Simmons (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Ursula McCanny (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Joseph Westland (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Raymond McCaffrey (Research Officer)
Mr Michael Potter (Research Officer)

10.32am The meeting opened at in public session.

4. **Topic of Committee's Next Review**

The Chairperson advised Members that the purpose of this agenda item was to continue the Committee's discussion on the topic of its next review.

The Chairperson referred Members to Assembly Research Briefing Papers entitled 'The Civic Forum' and 'Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly' and invited Research Officers from Assembly Research and Information Service to join the meeting.

10.34am The Assembly Research Officers joined the meeting.

An Assembly Research Officer briefed the Committee on the Research Paper entitled 'The Civic Forum'.

10.40am Mr Gregory Campbell joined the meeting.

10.45am Mr Raymond McCartney left the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

An Assembly Research Officer briefed the Committee on the Research Paper entitled 'Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly'.

10.53am Mr Stewart Dickson left the meeting.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the Assembly Research Officers for their briefings and for attending the meeting.

11.03am The Assembly Research Officers left the meeting.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that they had the option of moving into closed session to continue this discussion.

Agreed: To move into closed session.

11.03am The Committee moved into closed session.

The Committee discussed topics for the Committee's next review.

11.08am Ms Caitríona Ruane left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that secretariat would provide further information on the subject of Petitions of Concern as its immediate review topic for the autumn 2013 session.

11.15am The Committee moved into open session.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 16 September 2014, Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Paul Givan
Mr Trevor Lunn
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Pat Sheehan

Apologies: Mr Raymond McCartney

In Attendance: Mr John Simmons (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Jonathan Kerr (Clerical Officer)

10.34am The meeting opened in public session.

5. Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly Review – Barriers and Challenges (Evidence Session)

10.39am Witnesses joined the meeting.

10.39am Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson took on the role of Chairperson.

10.51am Paul Givan joined the meeting.

Members received evidence from Anne McVicker, Director of Women's Resource and Development Agency, Lynn Carvill, Chief Executive of Women's Tec and Annie Campbell, Director NI Women's Aid Federation NI on the key challenges and barriers for women in politics.

11.00am Paul Givan left the meeting.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their presentation and discussion which followed.

11.39am Witnesses left the meeting.

Agreed: To request from the NI Assembly Research and Information Service provide research on current training and development from community to the Government / NI Assembly level for women in or considering politics.

6. Breakdown of the Responses Received to Date from the Call for Evidence

Members noted the breakdown of the responses received.

Agreed: To prepare a draft programme for a half day event for consideration by the Committee at the next meeting.

7. Committee's Visit to Iceland

Members noted the draft visit programme and information in relation to the visit to Iceland from 24-26 September 2014 as part of its current Review of women in politics.

11.54am Caitríona Ruane left the meeting.

8. Additional information relating to the Review

The Committee noted some additional information relating to the Review.

11.56am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Pat Sheenan, Deputy Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 7 October 2014, Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Paul Givan
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Raymond McCartney
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Sean Rogers

In Attendance: Mr John Simmons (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

10.39am The meeting opened in public session.

4. **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly: Briefing from Ms Jane Morrice, Former MLA and Deputy Chairperson of the Northern Ireland Assembly**

10.50am Caitríona Ruane joined the meeting.

11.03am Gregory Campbell joined the meeting.

11.37am Paul Givan joined the meeting.

Members considered the key issues discussed which included the culture of politics, the role of the media and recommendations to encourage more women into politics

11.43am Witness left the meeting.

11.44am Raymond McCartney left the meeting.

5 & 6 **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Research and Information Services Papers**

Members considered the following research papers prepared by the Research and Information Services of the Northern Ireland Assembly:

- The Swedish General Elections 2014 and the Representation of Women
- Act for Real Equality between Women and Men – France

Agreed: To commission further research into job sharing and politics

Agreed: Research to provide information on the sitting days and timings of the Swedish Parliament.

7. **Feedback from the Committee's Visit to Iceland**

Members considered the draft report from the visit to Iceland.

Agreed: To make a minor change to the draft report.

Members considered the draft blog for the website.

Agreed: When available to upload the blog to the website.

12.05pm Gregory Campbell left the meeting.

8. Responses received to date from the ‘Call for Evidence’ on the Committee’s Current Review

Members noted the responses received to date.

Agreed: Members would encourage parties to respond as soon as possible to the current Review.

9. Consideration of a Review Event

Members considered the draft Review Event proposal paper.

Agreed: To hold a Review Event on 23 October 2014 in the Long Gallery, Parliament Building.

Members considered the list of key stakeholder participants.

Agreed: Members to provide the Secretariat Office with any additional participants.

Members considered a draft programme including Speakers for the Review Event.

Agreed: To adopt the programme for the Review Event on 23 October 2014.

10. Correspondence

Members noted the invitation from the Assembly Community Connect to participate in the NI Rural Women’s Network Annual Conference.

Members considered the request from the Assembly Community Connect for the Chairperson to speak at the NI Rural Women’s Network Annual Conference on the Inquiry into Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Agreed: Members agreed the Chairperson to speak at the Annual Conference of NIRWN.

Members noted the following correspondence:

- The Commissioner for Public Appointments Northern Ireland – Under-representation and lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland
- Gender Toolbox – What is gender budgeting?
- Information on Iceland’s Men Only UN Meeting on Women

12.17pm The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Pat Sheehan, Deputy Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

{EXTRACT}

Tuesday 4 November 2014, Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Paul Givan
Mr Raymond McCartney
Ms Caitríona Ruane

In Attendance: Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Michael Potter (Assembly Research)

10.43am The meeting opened in public session.

3. **Matters Arising**

Members noted a reminder to Parties to respond to the 'Call for Evidence' paper on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

10.45am Michael Potter, Assembly Research, joined the meeting.

4. **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly: Research and Information Services**

Members considered three research papers provided by Research and Information:

- Research Paper 1: Training and Support Programmes for Women in Politics
- Research Paper 2: Job sharing in Political Representation

10.57am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

10.57am Stephen Moutray left the meeting.

10.57am The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair.

- Research Paper 3: Sitting Times in the Swedish Riksdag

The key issues discussed included different training programmes, the pros and cons of job sharing, and childcare within the Riksdag.

11.13am Paul Given joined the meeting.

11.16am Michael Potter left the meeting.

11.18am Raymond McCartney left the meeting.

5. **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly: Outcome of the Inquiry Event held on 23 October 2014 and the Next Steps**

Members noted the outcome report from the Inquiry Event.

Agreed: The Committee thanked the Secretariat Office for the planning and delivery of the Event.

11.26am Raymond McCartney joined the meeting.

Members considered the presentation made by the Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk with regards to the next steps of the Inquiry.

- Agreed:* To seek further research on the following:
- The breakdown of gender in public appointments by Departments
 - The public appointment process which including training programme
 - Additional information on job sharing/twinning/zippping which is relevant to the Northern Ireland Assembly
 - Scheduling of voting times in other legislatures in the UK and Ireland

11.45am The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Pat Sheehan, Deputy Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 18 November 2014, Room 21, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Paul Givan
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Raymond McCartney
Ms Caitríona Ruane

In Attendance: Ms Claire McCannay (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

10.35am The meeting opened in public session.

3. **Matters Arising**

Members noted the research papers prepared by the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Services on the following issues:

- A breakdown of gender in public appointments by Departments and the Public Appointment Process which includes Training Programmes
- Additional Information on Job Sharing / Twinning/Zippering which is relevant to the Northern Ireland Assembly
- Scheduling of voting times in other legislatures in the UK and Ireland.

Members noted a briefing paper prepared by the Secretariat Office on the Review of the Procedures Committee on the current organisation of the business week and the consideration of electronic voting in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

11.42am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson
Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 25 November 2014, Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont

Present: Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Paul Givan
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Raymond McCartney
Ms Caitríona Ruane

In Attendance: Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Gavin Ervine (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

10.34am The meeting opened in public session.

4. Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Review of Evidence

Agreed: Members agreed that a short video of the Committee's Inquiry event on 23 October 2014 should be uploaded onto the Committee's webpages.

Noted: Members noted the response from the Alliance Party and the Green Party in response to the Committee's Call for Evidence paper

Agreed: Members agreed that all submissions received in response to the Committee's 'Call for Evidence' should be published on the Committee's webpage.

Members considered the evidence received as part of the Committee Inquiry on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

10.48am Raymond McCartney joined the meeting.

10.59 Gregory Campbell left the meeting.

11.09am Paul Givan joined the meeting.

11.14am Paul Givan left the meeting.

11.19am Raymond McCartney left the meeting.

11.37am Trevor Lunn left the meeting.

11.46am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson
Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 9 December 2014, Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Raymond McCartney
Mr Seán Rogers
Mr Alastair Ross
Ms Caitríona Ruane

In Attendance: Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

9.34am The meeting opened in public session.

3. **Matters Arising**

The Committee noted a paper from the Assembly Research and Information Services on a breakdown of Sittings of the Northern Ireland Assembly beyond 6pm.

The Committee noted the submissions from Sinn Féin, the DUP and SDLP in response to the 'Call for Evidence' paper with regards to the inquiry into Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

9.42am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

9.42am Paula Bradley joined the meeting.

5. **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Committee Consideration**

The Committee considered draft conclusions and recommendations in relation to the Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Standards and Privileges Committee regarding the new Code of Practice

10.00am Alastair Ross left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to make a number of minor amendments and to reconsider the draft conclusions at the meeting of 13 January 2014.

10.02am Gregory Campbell joined the meeting

7. **Any Other Business**

The Committee noted an article on the creation of an Institutional women's caucus to promote gender equality in the EU Institutions.

10.03am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson
Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 13 January 2015

Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Seán Rogers
Mr Alastair Ross
Ms Caitríona Ruane

In Attendance: Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

10.30am The meeting opened in public session.

4. Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Committee Consideration

The Committee reviewed the amended conclusions and recommendations in relation to the Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly Review.

Agreed: To make a number of minor amendments to the draft and to discuss the conclusions and recommendations at the next meeting.

The Committee noted the draft report.

Agreed: To be considered at the next meeting.

10.43am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 27 January 2015, Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Seán Rogers
Mr Alastair Ross
Raymond McCartney
Ms Caitríona Ruane

In Attendance: Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

10.05am The meeting opened in public session.

10.07am The meeting moved into closed session.

3. **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Committee Consideration**

Members reviewed the amended conclusions and recommendations in relation to the Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly Review.

10.18am Pat Sheehan joined the meeting.

10.23am Caitríona Ruane left the meeting.

10.28am Seán Rogers left the meeting.

10.30am Caitríona Ruane joined the meeting.

10.45am Raymond McCartney left the meeting.

10.48am Raymond McCartney joined the meeting.

10.48am Pat Sheehan left the meeting.

Agreed: To make a number of minor amendments to the draft and to discuss the conclusions and recommendations at the next meeting.

Members noted the draft report.

Agreed: To be considered at the next meeting.

11.17am Raymond McCartney left the meeting.

5. **Correspondence**

Members noted the response from the Committee of Standards and Privilege regarding gender and the new Code of Conduct.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the correspondence in its Report on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

11.31am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 10 February 2015

Room 21, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Alastair Ross
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Ms Robin Swann

In Attendance: Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Kate McCullough (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

9.34am The meeting opened in public session.

4. Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Committee Consideration of Final Report

9.36am Paula Bradley joined the meeting.

The Committee considered a paper which provided more information on a number of recommendations considered at the meeting of 27 January 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to make minor amendments to the paper.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive clarification on Dáil Éireann's financial penalties legislation as provided previously by the Assembly's Research and Information Service.

The Committee considered the draft final Report of the Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

9.44am Gregory Campbell joined the meeting.

9.45am Paula Bradley left the meeting.

9.57am Robin Swann left the meeting.

10.14am Caitríona Ruane left the meeting.

10.16am Caitríona Ruane joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Cover Pages and paragraphs 1-28 of the Report agreed with suggested amendments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an additional meeting on Tuesday 17 February to agree the final draft Report - Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

10.21am The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]

Tuesday 17 February 2015, Room 21, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont

Present: Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Raymond McCartney
Mr Séan Rogers
Mr Alastair Ross
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Ms Robin Swann

In Attendance: Ms Claire McCanny (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Ms Hilary Cleland-Bogle (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jim Nulty (Clerical Supervisor)

10.03 am The meeting opened in public session.

3. **Matters Arising**

The Committee noted the letter and invitation from the Speaker with regards to the Committee's Review on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly and the visit by Dame Rosemary Butler AM, the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include the letter from the Speaker in Appendix 4 of the Committee's Report.

The Committee noted the amendments to the Clerk's paper from 5 February 2015 and the extract from the Assembly Research paper regarding legislation introduced by Dáil Éireann on financial penalties for political parties.

4. **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Committee Consideration of Final Report**

The Chairperson advised members that the purpose of this agenda item was to continue the Committee's discussion on finalising its Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly and there was an option to move into closed session for this.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into closed session at 10.05am

The Committee considered its final draft Report on the Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

10.06am Ms Caitríona Ruane MLA joined the meeting

10.06am Mr Alastair Ross MLA joined the meeting.

10.15am Mr Pat Sheehan MLA joined the meeting.

10.37 am Mr Robin Swann MLA joined the meeting.

11.07am Mr Alastair Ross MLA left the meeting.

11.24am Mr Gregory Campbell MLA left the meeting.

11.35am Mr Séan Rogers MLA left the meeting.

5. Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – Committee Final Agreement of the Report.

11.42am The Committee moved into open session.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the purpose of this session was to allow the Committee to agree the final draft of the Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly and the draft motion for Assembly Plenary debate on the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘covering pages’ and the ‘Executive Summary’ section stand part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Summary of Recommendations’ section stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Introduction’ section stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Committee’s Approach to the Review’ section stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Committee’s Approach to the Review’ section stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Committee Scrutiny’ section stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Committee Consideration of Key Barriers and Challenges’ stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Committee Consideration of Positive Actions’ section stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Conclusions and Recommendations’ section stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the ‘Glossary of Terms’ section stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Appendix 1 of the Report, the Extract of the Minutes of Proceedings relating to the Review, stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Appendix 2 of the Report, the Minutes of Evidence relating to the Review, stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Appendix 3 of the Report, Stakeholders Submission stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Appendix 4 of the Report, Correspondence and other papers relating to the Review, stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Appendix 5 of the Report, Assembly Research Papers, stands part of the Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed “That the Report be the sixth Report of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee to the Assembly.”

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Report be debated in Plenary and agreed the wording of a draft motion for the debate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Secretariat makes any amendments to the Report as agreed by the Committee and takes the necessary actions to ensure that the Committee report is printed and published in accordance with Assembly guidelines.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 11.48 am

Mr Stephen Moutray, Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

[EXTRACT]



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 2

Minutes of Evidence

6 May 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Raymond McCartney

Witnesses:

Mr Michael Potter *Research and
Information Service*

1. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I would like to welcome Michael Potter from the Assembly's Research and Information Service. You are more than welcome, Michael. Feel free to carry on with your briefing. We will then questions.
2. **Mr Michael Potter (Research and Information Service):** Thank you very much. Members will recall that, in September last year, I presented the research paper 'Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly'. On this occasion, I will give a brief overview of the content, rather than go into too much detail on that paper. Earlier this year, a brief update was tabled, mainly to inform the Committee about developments with regard to women's representation in the National Assembly for Wales. I will say a few words about that.
3. The Committee asked for comparative figures for women in local councils and a gender breakdown of candidates for the forthcoming elections. In the briefing note on local council representation, there is a comparative diagram that shows that Northern Ireland currently has around 23·5% female representation in local councils. That is at page 61 of your pack. Northern Ireland is represented by the purple line on the diagram on the second page of that note. Northern Ireland's figure is just below Scotland's 24·3% and the 26·3% for Wales. England has the highest representation, which has been steady at 31% for the past few years.
4. With regard to the trajectory, if you look at the purple line, you will see that Northern has been on an upward trend over the past few years. However, a preliminary count of candidates for the local elections on 22 May this year suggests that that rise will not continue. That is shown in the paper that has just been handed out to you, which did not quite make it into the pack. The figures suggest that 24% of candidates are female. Historically, a similar proportion of women tend to gain seats as stand. Sometimes, the figure is a bit lower. That would indicate that there will not be any huge change in female representation at local council level after the elections. However, you never can tell what the outcome will be. Forty per cent of candidates for the elections to the European Parliament are women.
5. Turning back to the main paper, I will briefly summarise the extent of female representation in the Assembly in comparative perspective; what are considered to be the causal factors for that; and some suggestions that have been made to increase representation. I should just note briefly that there are two forms of representation. One is descriptive representation, which is the actual number of women represented in a legislature. The other is substantive representation, which indicates that women's views and issues are being dealt with by the legislature. We deal mostly with descriptive representation, which tends to count women. Substantive representation refers to whether women's issues are actually being dealt with in the legislature.
6. There are currently 22 female MLAs, which is 20% of the Assembly membership. The rise to 22 is due to the recent co-option of Claire Sugden. Comparative figures in the papers

- show that the Assembly has the lowest representation of women among the legislatures on these islands, except for Dáil Éireann. However, there will be a quota of 30% for the next Dáil election, suggesting that that position will change somewhat. Barriers to women's participation have been summarised as three sets of key questions. The first is political barriers; the notion of a masculine model of politics and the question of whether the practice of politics itself happens in such a way that puts women off participating; party factors and whether women feel that they have a place or are encouraged in parties; cooperation with community organisations and whether there are links with organisations such as women's groups to nurture and encourage future female politicians, and electoral systems. Studies have shown some systems to be more conducive to electing more women than others. I will mention that a bit later. It is not always conclusive.
7. The second set of barriers are socio-economic questions and financial resources. The reality is that political life may require a degree of economic independence or resourcing. Research has shown that women are more susceptible to poverty and suffer disproportionately from economic inequalities. There is the so-called dual burden; women tend to have primary responsibility for caring obligations in the family, such as children, older people or family members with disabilities or illnesses, leaving fewer opportunities to pursue a time-consuming career such as politics. With regard to education and training, women tend to be streamed away from areas that are more aligned to politics, such as management and leadership, economics, business or law, and towards caring, clerical and cashiering jobs.
 8. The third set of questions is around ideological or social barriers. Women and men tend to be socialised into a pattern that politics is a male domain, which can deter women. There is a lack of confidence. I do not necessarily mean
- a lack of assertiveness, though — there are plenty of assertive women around — but a sense of exclusion or of a lack of transferable life skills sets to politics. There is the perception of politics and whether political culture, such as the adversarial nature of debating, deters women. Then there is the role of media and whether the image of politicians is a male model.
9. So, various methods have been suggested for increasing the participation of women, many of which can be used in combination. I will just summarise the breadth of them and perhaps focus on a couple of examples that may be of interest to the Committee. The first is electoral systems. Some models for elections are considered to be more conducive to greater female representation, such as proportional representation and larger district magnitudes. However, that is not always conclusive. It does not always happen that way.
 10. The second is party policies. Party methods of candidate selection, training, support, organisation or party cultures can either encourage or deter women.
 11. Then there are quotas, which come in different forms and different percentages. The UK currently has voluntary quotas that parties may apply by law. Voluntary quotas with penalties is the system that is used in the Dáil, where parties lose a proportion of funds if they do not meet the quota for candidates. There are hard legal quotas, where a list is rejected if it does not have a certain proportion of women, such as in certain elections in France. Clearly, that works only with a fully proportional system. Then, there are seat quotas, such as in Kosovo. Where those are applied, women are guaranteed a proportion of seats regardless of whether there are men with more votes.
 12. There are parliamentary procedures. The operation of a legislature can be reviewed to examine whether it attracts or deters women. I will come back to that point in one of the examples. There

- are support mechanisms. Direct support to women, such as training, personal development, mentoring or resources can be used to encourage women to stand as candidates and, crucially, play a part in the retention of women in politics, which can apply to women who are already elected, women in parties or outreach, such as investment in community-based initiatives to encourage and support women to consider entering politics.
13. I will concentrate on two specific examples which may be of interest to the Committee. The update paper briefly mentions actions taken in the National Assembly for Wales. Female representation in Wales has fluctuated in recent years. After a high of getting to the 50% mark, now, 40% of Assembly Members are female. The Speaker of the Assembly, Dame Rosemary Butler, instigated an initiative in 2012 called Women in Public Life, which was aimed at the elections in 2016. It is, therefore, a long-term programme with a specific aim and buy-in from the key elements of the legislature. The initiative has included the creation of a “Women in Public Life” web portal; a seminar series to raise awareness of the issues and to look at the options for increasing and sustaining female participation; a conference to draw together the outcomes of the seminar series and raise awareness; and a development scheme for individual women with a view to participation in public life. One of the outcomes is expected to be the formation of a women’s caucus or cross-party group. The key elements of the initiative are its long-term aims, the involvement of the Assembly as a whole, and the multidimensional nature of associated actions that are crafted to local conditions.
 14. There are various guides to making legislatures more female friendly. The Inter-Parliamentary Union’s ‘Gender-Sensitive Parliaments’ is one such guide, which contains a wide-ranging list of suggestions, including the following: the promotion of gender equality in the legislature through the implementation of equality policies; rules for gender-neutral language; rules or codes around parliamentary language and behaviour; family-friendly sitting hours; provisions for those with families, such as childcare facilities, parental leave or family-friendly spaces; gender training programmes for all members, male and female; a women’s caucus or cross-party group; regularised links with women’s groups and other civil society organisations; a review of women in leadership positions in the legislature; a code of conduct to prohibit sexist behaviour; a review of the maleness of the institution, such as working practices, ceremonies, artwork in the building etc; gender mainstreaming in all assembly business; and consideration of the formation of an equality committee within the legislature.
 15. That is a selection of examples of what could be implemented and adapted to the particular circumstances of a particular legislature. Generally, the literature tends to agree that no one method is a guarantee of increased participation, but that a combination is appropriate to particular circumstances. That is a brief overview of the four papers. I am happy to take questions.
 16. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thank you for that, Michael. I will open up the meeting for questions.
 17. **Ms P Bradley:** Thank you for your presentation. As a female MLA, I suppose that I have a greater understanding of some of the things that you have said. However, a lot of it does not ring with me as factual. I did not see too many barriers to becoming an MLA, other than the barriers that I put up myself. The barriers were not socio-economic, related to my party, or any of those things. The barriers were the ones that Paula put up, just thinking whether I could do it or not. It was maybe more of a confidence thing than anything else, and I am a confident person.
 18. I am just a normal Joe Bloggs. I am a single parent, and I had things going against me for many years that would

- have stopped me from doing many things, but that was not my personality. Therefore, I fall into a lot of the categories that you talked about, but it still did not stop me achieving my goals and doing what I wanted to do. I cannot get my head round why a lot of what you said would stop a female from going into politics, even the issue of a code of conduct. We have a code of conduct here. I sit on the Standards and Privileges Committee, and any sexist comments go straight to the Standards and Privileges Committee, and we deal with them, not that I have come across anything like that.
19. I was in the police for years, and I have heard more people out on the street giving me sexist comments than I ever heard either in the police or in this Building. We already have a lot of things in place in the Assembly. I am really interested in this, and I want us to look at this to see why we have fewer women here, but there would need to be some very concrete reasons. With regard to the working hours, if you work in the health service, you work really bad hours compared with this place. At least we get home most nights at a reasonable time, and we have every Sunday off. If you work in other jobs, you might work over the weekend. There are lots of different things that should not be barriers. There are other jobs out there that have much more unfriendly hours. I do not know how we are ever going to come to a conclusion on this, albeit I want us to look at it.
20. **Mr Potter:** Across the literature that contributed to the papers, one can see that there are women like yourself who get through, despite the barriers. A lot of the research looks at women in the community who are asked about the barriers to entering politics that they see. The papers draw on a broad range of literature across these islands.
21. **Ms P Bradley:** I represent North Belfast and I do an awful lot of work with women's groups and I give speeches and speak to them. It is the same in this Building because, as one of the few females here, it is the females who are asked to speak to visiting women's groups. It is only after they sit down and speak to me or other females that they realise that I am no different. We need to break that barrier and we need to look at the females in politics and make them better role models for women out there. Most of the people in those community groups, after speaking on a one-to-one basis especially to a female representative, will realise that it is perfectly possible for them to do this job.
22. The problem is more about breaking down those barriers; it is not the political parties as such because most of our political parties will have a structure in place that promotes women. The DUP has a women's caucus that holds meetings and has a separate women's conference. Even at our main party conference we have a breakout session which is just for the women's part. It is very active and very vocal. I believe that most of the political parties are like that; they will have a stream that women can come through. However, I see the problem as being in the community and how it views politicians as role models. People in the community see this place very differently from the way we see it. We see it as work; we come into work. That is, perhaps, where we need to break through.
23. **Mr McCartney:** You said that Leinster House is going to have a quota of 30%, but that is for candidates.
24. **Mr Potter:** Yes. I can think only of Kosovo as an assembly that reserves seats. There was a lot of opposition to that at the beginning and there was resistance to quotas across the Balkans, but they have got used to it now.
25. **Mr McCartney:** That means that there would be nearly a dual election. If you were trying to reserve seats specifically, you need a list system.
26. **Mr Potter:** Yes, you need a list system. The whole country is one constituency, and they have lists and just move down to the next person.
27. **Mr McCartney:** The 30% quota puts the onus on parties. There is no doubt that

- Paula spoke about this — women are under-represented right across the professions; we had a debate recently about senior civil servants. It is, first, about trying to determine the causes and the mechanisms we can put in place.
28. I am just reading the briefing document; only one woman MLA has been here from the beginning. If you look around, I am not sure how many men there would be, but it is a higher number. It may be a combination of factors such as age, different jobs and different profiles, but it is a question of identifying the barriers. That is part of what this is trying to identify; there are undoubtedly barriers but it is about the methods we employ to tackle them. Have you looked at that? I know that, at the beginning, on reflection, people here would have said that the hours here are more family friendly. You can see that from other legislatures; the late-night sessions here are not as frequent. We might be able to explore things such as that as we go through the process.
29. **Mr Potter:** Yes, certainly, and Paula is absolutely right as well. We have a lot of mechanisms here, but it might be worth looking at how we do business here to see where the barriers are; we have that start point. The papers draw on literature from across these islands, so we are talking about England and Wales, the Republic of Ireland and Scotland, as well as here. It is a chicken-and-egg situation where, in order to have those role models, how do you get them if one fifth of the current Assembly is female? How do we use those female Assembly Members? We can have them going round the community being good role models, but then they would not be doing their job in the legislature. It is about how we get to that critical mass to have that number of role models; that is the key question.
30. **Mr McCartney:** I think that is key. It is the critical mass. In the Justice Committee, we have had a number of presentations from the Department on the legal system. Up to a certain level, female representation is fairly good, but it reaches a particular level, and from there on up it becomes very male dominated. It is about trying to find the mechanism. The lower statistical reading does not mean that women are not interested in trying to pursue a career in law but, somewhere along the line, there is a barrier, and it is about trying to find out what the barrier is and how you help to dismantle it.
31. **Mr Campbell:** It is a very interesting paper. There is one question that I just do not know the answer to. Hopefully, you can help us with it. You said that one of the situations where women were more likely to succeed was when the electoral area was a larger district.
32. **Mr Potter:** Yes, a larger district magnitude.
33. **Mr Campbell:** Why would women be more likely to succeed in a larger electorate compared with a smaller one?
34. **Mr Potter:** I suppose that there is the fact and the explanation. The fact is that it does happen; more women tend to be elected in larger district magnitudes. The assumption is that, where there are one or two people for each constituency, the preference goes to a male or to a sitting member. Very often, sitting members tend to be re-elected, whereas, if you have more seats, there is more likelihood of women being considered. That is the assumption, but, statistically, that is what happens.
35. **Mr Campbell:** And, statistically, is that what happens throughout Europe?
36. **Mr Potter:** Generally speaking, yes.
37. **Mr Campbell:** It was mentioned that there has only been one woman here since 1998. Given the higher propensity for re-election and a more male-dominated electoral society, if those two things continue, it will be more difficult for women. Has any research been done to show that, where there is a greater turnover of candidates in what was previously a male-dominated electoral system, females are more likely to succeed?

38. **Mr Potter:** Not that I have seen. That is interesting. I will have a look to see if there is anything on that.
39. **Mr Campbell:** It strikes me that, if there is a greater turnover and parties are turning their minds to increasing the percentage and numbers of females, that gives them more opportunity, whereas if the turnover remains relatively low, females are less likely to be successful.
40. **Mr Potter:** Yes, I will have a look at that.
41. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I wanted to ask you about the paper that we have just received on candidates for the 2014 local government elections. You are saying that the proportion of women candidates matches the current proportion of sitting women councillors, which suggests that there will not be a significant increase after the elections. What was the situation in the previous local government election? Is there any difference in the percentage of women candidates?
42. **Mr Potter:** I think that the proportion of candidates and the proportion who were elected was about the same. That is my understanding.
43. **The Deputy Chairperson:** So there has been no significant change?
44. **Mr Potter:** There has been an increase in the last couple of elections in Northern Ireland of female representation at council level. So we are on an upward trend. England tends to be fairly steady and has plateaued at around 31%, whereas the others tend to fluctuate quite a bit.
45. **Ms P Bradley:** I am sorry; I did not hear that question or the answer.
46. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I was just asking about the number of women candidates in local councils compared with the last election.
47. **Ms P Bradley:** I have noticed that the number in my own council area has gone down since I ran for council. Have we any evidence on quotas that have been in for a longer period? Some are relatively new, and there have not been enough elections to look at how that has balanced out over a 10- to 15-year period. Are the countries that have quotas keeping them at the same level or has the participation of women gone down in the countries in which there have been quotas for a number of years?
48. **Mr Potter:** Generally, from what I have seen, particularly in the Scandinavian countries, and most post-conflict countries as well, they tend to be sustained. There has been some fluctuation, up and down.
49. **Ms P Bradley:** So, after a period of time, there is no need for quotas?
50. **Mr Potter:** I have not come across any examples where a quota has been removed because it has been considered that it is not needed any more.
51. **Ms P Bradley:** Maybe we have not reached that point yet with some of the countries.
52. **Mr Potter:** There is a lot of evidence of quotas being introduced that have been very unpopular or have been challenged but where they have got used to them. There is literature around that.
53. **Ms P Bradley:** It is maybe something that we are not going to know the answer to for a number of years.
54. **Mr Campbell:** I have a brief question on the issue you raised about the current council candidate list. I suppose it is a bit early, but were you able to do any research on parties' progress on female candidates in 2014 compared with the last time and the time before that to see whether everybody is making progress at different rates or whether some parties have actually regressed a bit?
55. **Mr Potter:** I have not looked specifically at that. My impression is that most of the large parties have increased their female candidate representation. There are a lot of independents this time round, and independents tend to be male. It is one of those things. I could

- be wrong on a couple of those, but my impression is that the larger parties are slightly up compared with last time.
56. **Mr McCartney:** Regarding your table of other national legislatures and where there is a high percentage of women representatives, were the steps taken due to parties or did they put more emphasis on it due to being emerging democracies? What strikes me is that the comparison between what is called “lower” or “single house” and “upper house” is very similar. Therefore, the representation in an elected body and, in the main, all elected bodies, is remarkably similar. We will maybe need to get an explanation for that as we take this forward.
57. **Mr Potter:** A lot of the national legislatures across the world are post-conflict bodies. In Rwanda, for example, a quota was imposed, which they got used to. It is the same with some of the Balkan countries. However, in countries such as Sweden and other Scandinavian countries, there tends to be a general societal provision, if you like, for female participation across business, politics, and other parts of life. There is a social democratic element there as well. I have not found a formula that fits all. Each context is very different and they seem to achieve it in different ways.
58. In these islands, the pattern is not followed by our most successful legislature for female representation, which is Wales. They kind of bucked the trend in having specific provisions for women when they reached 50%. I am not sure of the detail on that, certainly in terms of political systems.
59. **Mr McCartney:** Taking a country such as Sweden, the read-across professions in general would be similar. There is good representation of women in the law, the public sector etc?
60. **Mr Potter:** Yes. A paper was published in January that looked across all gender issues in Northern Ireland in general. It showed a general pattern of under-representation in positions of leadership
- in business, the Civil Service and public life.
61. **Mr McCartney:** If a similar survey were done, again taking Sweden as an example, good representation in the Parliament would be translated across all the professions?
62. **Mr Potter:** That is my understanding, yes.
63. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Michael, have any surveys been carried out among the female MLAs here on what difficulties or barriers they might encounter?
64. **Mr Potter:** Not that I am aware of. Some community-based research has included talking to some female MLAs and women at local council level, but I am not aware of a broad survey of all female MLAs.
65. **The Deputy Chairperson:** There are no more questions so thank you, Michael, for coming along today. It is a very interesting bit of work. I am sure that we will see you again in the course of the review. Thanks very much.
66. **Mr McCartney:** Gregory Campbell made a point about the candidates in previous local government elections compared with this year. It would be useful to see that information.
67. **Ms P Bradley:** Information on the results of the forthcoming elections would also be useful. A lot of the smaller parties field a lot of female candidates. I would like to see how many of them are elected. We know how many female candidates there are, but the important bit is how many are actually elected.
68. **Mr Potter:** Yes.
69. **The Deputy Chairperson:** OK. Thanks again, Michael.

27 May 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Mr Gregory Campbell
Mr Seán Rogers
Ms Caitríona Ruane

Witnesses:

Ms Paula Bradley MLA	<i>All-party Group on UNSCR 1325</i>
Dr Ann Marie Gray	<i>Northern Ireland Women's European Platform</i>
Ms Emma Patterson-Bennett	

70. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Paula Bradley MLA is the chairperson of the Assembly's all-party group on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325: Women, Peace and Security and has agreed to provide a briefing to the Committee on its work. Paula is accompanied by Dr Ann Marie Gray, a member of the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP), which provides the secretariat to the all-party group. Hansard is also present to report the session. I invite Paula and Dr Gray to make their submissions. You are very welcome, Ann Marie.

71. **Ms Paula Bradley (All-party Group on UNSCR 1325):** Am I welcome too, Chair? *[Laughter.]*

72. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Yes. You are always welcome, Paula.

73. **Ms P Bradley:** I thank the Committee for inviting us to talk about UNSCR 1325. I also introduce Emma Patterson, who is sitting to my left. Emma also provides secretariat support to the all-party group on UNSCR 1325. She is not here in a talking capacity but in an advising capacity. I also thank Dr Ann Marie Gray for being here.

74. In the Assembly, we have the all-party group on UNSCR 1325: Women, Peace and Security. When I say that sentence,

most people glaze over as they do not have a clue what it is about. That goes for a lot of the women in the Northern Ireland Assembly as well. In fact, most of the people who know what 1325 is about are from our community groups. They are the ones who seem to be most informed on 1325, not those in our political structures. The group was set up during the last mandate by Dawn Purvis and Anna Lo. In this mandate, my party selected me as the representative for the DUP.

75. I have to be very honest and say that if I were not the chair of the all-party group (APG) it would not have got very far, because we have little or no representation from other parties. In saying that, Megan Fearon from Sinn Féin has now come on board. I know that she will be an asset to the APG, but it has taken some time to get people involved. I do not know whether the title or the issue puts a lot of people off, but we are getting there slowly but surely.

76. The themes of 1325 are participation, promotion, prevention and relief and recovery post conflict. That is what we have been working towards. We have had many witness sessions with various groups, not only from Northern Ireland but cross-border with the Republic of Ireland. Our 1325 APG in the Assembly very much feeds into Westminster and Europe in general. It is a rather important all-party group, albeit it is poorly attended and there is not a lot of publicity or anything like that around it. It is an extremely important all-party group for the participation of women.

77. In December, we held our Westminster inquiry in the Assembly. On the panel, we had Baroness Ruth Lister, who also sits on the Westminster all-party group on 1325, and Margaret Owen, a human rights lawyer. They came to the Assembly to hear all the witness sessions. The inquiry was also a long

- time in the making, and we do not yet have the results or outcomes from it.
78. As I said before, local communities, generally, are more involved in 1325, although we do have people in business, public bodies and, of course, politics.
79. The inquiry had the following five themes: gender equality; women in decision-making; women in community; women in electoral politics, which is what we are here to talk about; and violence against women. We have not discussed women in the Northern Ireland Assembly at length in the all-party group, though we have discussed women and their role in communities at length and women in local government. We very much feel that this is the ground from which we need to take our female MLAs. A lot of them start off as community activists and as a voice in their community. They go on to be voices in their local councils and then progress to the Northern Ireland Assembly. All those other components are vitally important.
80. At this stage, I will pass over to Dr Gray, who will give you a bit more technical information.
81. **Dr Ann Marie Gray (Northern Ireland Women's European Platform):** I think it might be useful to say something about the purpose of the United Nations resolution. Paula is right: sometimes the terminology is enough to put people off.
82. The resolution is about women, peace and security. It was established by the United Nations in 2000 because of recognition across the world that unless women are really involved in building peace and in addressing conflict it is really difficult to achieve stability and lasting peace in any countries involved in conflict. There is plenty of research from across the world to demonstrate that this is the case. As an NGO, we became interested in the resolution primarily because of our work with the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). We realised that this was a mechanism that could be used in Northern Ireland, not just to support women into politics and decision-making but to help society move forward. For that reason, we became keen supporters of it. We did a lot of work to educate, as Paula said. The people who really know about the resolution, we think, are the NGOs. An important part of the work of the all-party group is to increase awareness of the resolution, what it can do and its purpose among politicians in local government and in the Assembly.
83. Sometimes, there can be a tendency for some Governments to see the resolution as a threat. I do not think that there is any evidence of that at all. It is about women, peace and security. It is about encouraging, facilitating and supporting women into equal positions in decision-making. I do not think that any politician or party here would disagree that this is not a good thing to do. It is a good thing to do.
84. It is also useful in encouraging young people to become involved in politics. If we can get more women into politics, we will get more young people involved in politics too, and vice versa. When we held the inquiry here and saw witness after witness coming forward in the open and closed sessions to talk about why we need the implementation of the resolution here, certainly its principles, nobody could fail to be convinced by that.
85. We are now writing up all the information from the inquiry. We started to disseminate and discuss it with various women's constituencies. We have had a policy round-table with rural women. We will be going to one with young women very shortly. Then, at the end of June, we are going to have a North/South round-table with policymakers. That is not about collecting more information but is about saying, "Here is the evidence that we have, and we have a lot of evidence, and how can we move forward on that evidence".
86. In the autumn, the all-party group at Westminster will facilitate a policy round-table there. We then want to bring

- the inquiry process to its culmination with a conference in Belfast, where we will put the evidence before decision-makers and say, “What can you do now to help us to move forward on these recommendations?” It is very much about moving forward.
87. As an organisation and all-party group, we feel that we have a lot of credible evidence about the need for these principles to be implemented, so it is about how that is done.
88. **The Deputy Chairperson:** In the practical or technical sense, how would the resolution be implemented?
89. **Dr Gray:** It is the principles that are implemented. At the technical level, the UK Government could say that they support the implementation of the resolution in Northern Ireland. As this Committee probably knows, the UK Government have so far resisted doing that because of the kind of conflict that existed in Northern Ireland. The UK Government are a firm supporter of this resolution internationally and have done more work than probably any other European Government in increasing awareness and the application of the resolution, but there is an issue with Northern Ireland.
90. When the UK Government were before the CEDAW committee at the United Nations last July, they were asked about their failure to implement the resolution in Northern Ireland, because it is seen as being so central to women in decision-making. The answer was that Northern Ireland could not be defined as a conflict in international law.
91. The issue is the implementation of the principles. We want to see the principles that Paula talked about: the participation, recovery, relief and prevention of conflict. We think that they could be implemented here without the UK Government technically implementing the resolution. That debate can still take place but, in the meantime, we can move along on these issues.
92. **Ms Ruane:** Go raibh maith agaibh. Tá fáilte romhaibh. Thank you, and you are both very welcome. Paula, I want to put my support for the work that you are doing on the record. I think it is really important. I know we are from different parties, but we need cross-party consensus. I do genuinely pay tribute to the work you have done. What I can say is that Sinn Féin will be participating. I speak as a former member of the group, and you will know that, once I became Whip, the meetings were at the exact same time as those of the Business Committee. What we need to do now is ensure that we have full participation, and I know that Megan will play a very important role.
93. I welcome your being part of our deliberations here, because, to centralise gender at every single level of the Assembly, we need to make sure that it does not just become the preserve of one all-party group, and I know that you do not want to see that either. You are the catalyst. It is important that this Committee is looking at it. I also put on record my support for the Speaker’s letter to the Committee, because this issue needs to be led from the front and by people in leadership positions.
94. I am not surprised that the NGOs are ahead. I was in Beijing and saw the power and dynamism of the NGOs. It was the most phenomenal 10 days that I have ever had in my life. We have a lot to learn from the NGOs. Dr Gray, if you have any ideas on how we go forward — and I know that Paula will feed them in anyway — we would welcome your advice. I am sure that you are giving advice to officials here.
95. I have a small question. Even in the past four days, we have seen a huge increase in the number of women in politics, which I really welcome. I welcome the fact that we have two women MEPs in the North, our party has two in the South, and other parties have women. I hope that we have an increase. I see a big increase of women in local government, and that gives me a lot of hope. They are good, strong, articulate women. My daughters came to me the other day and said that there was some

- new research out which confirms to me what we have seen anecdotally. It found that although we have advancement of women we do not have enough advancement of working class women. There might be a bit of a difference in our elections, but I wonder whether you would like to comment on that. I do not want to see only middle class women succeeding and working class women being left behind to deal with the poverty, discrimination, child-rearing, lack of child care, lack of education etc.
96. **Ms P Bradley:** Can I just come in on this first? I know that Ann Marie and Emma will agree with me on this. During our Westminster inquiry, we had closed sessions with women whom you would deem to be from a working class background, and many of them were suppressed in their own communities — across all communities, both unionist and nationalist — in giving their voice and saying what they thought.
97. We have seen an increase in domestic violence and in women being suppressed in the unionist community. One of the reasons for it not being reported is due to the fact that a lot of their men are out on licence as a result of the Belfast Agreement. If they were seen as being perpetrators of domestic violence they would end up back in prison. It has been said in the nationalist community that if women speak out and try to have their voice heard, they are seen as going against the Belfast Agreement. Therefore, there are a lot of things going on in our working class communities that are suppressing female voices, and we are not getting those female voices into the next level and into local government.
98. I am encouraged by local government. As you say, it is the training ground, and I believe it is where I learned my trade to a degree, albeit that it does not totally prepare you for this place. Nevertheless, it is a fantastic training ground for bringing prospective female MLAs into the Assembly, and I am encouraged by the number of women. It will be interesting to see the final figure for the women elected and see whether it has gone up or down.
99. There are problems in our local communities, and women's voices are being suppressed. If you were to look at the role of women in our communities prior to the Belfast Agreement, you would see that the role of women was much higher and that they were doing a lot of the peace building. Now that we are post-Belfast Agreement, we find that men are coming forward to take the glory for a lot of the things that have happened. It was not men; it was women in our local communities who were crossing the divide and making a difference. As you know, that is not coming through now, however many years we are — 16 years — down the line. I think that we have taken a backward step.
100. **Dr Gray:** I absolutely agree with what Paula said in terms of the evidence we received. Women in communities in which they would have controlled the purse strings, if you like, with respect to projects and budgets, are now saying to us that this is probably less the case in some communities. So, they have less determination over how money is spent, what it is spent on and who it is spent by. What the research tells us about working class women generally is that there are issues around education and the kind of jobs they go into. There is natural progression from some professions into politics, and less so from others. However, I think there are additional issues in Northern Ireland. The fact that we have had weak local government in the past has been an issue. You are right, Ms Ruane, when you say that if we get more women into local government that could hopefully also make a difference to representation at the Assembly.
101. However, we also have to face the fact that among young women, particularly young working class women in Northern Ireland, there is some disaffection with politics. In our work with this Committee and the inquiry — in addition to being on the NIWEP committee, I also chair a youth organisation, Youth Action, and

we have been doing work with NIWEP around political representation — that disaffection has come through really strongly, particularly from young women. We have been trying to talk about why that is the case. Some of it is due to the fact that it seems to be difficult for them to relate to politics because of the lack of role models and because of the sense that it is hard for them to see what is tangibly being done for them. It is an issue of connection, of the mechanisms and structures of the Assembly and local government actually connecting with those young people.

102. It is not all down to what the politicians or the structures need to do; the youth sector and the education sector have a really fundamental role to play. The experience of the youth sector was that organisations shied away from political education and political literacy in the past because it may have been controversial or sensitive. A number of organisations, Youth Action included, are doing a lot of work now to address that. Among those organisations, this has increased the number of young people who are voting and so on.
103. We had a day coming up to the European elections. Paula and a number of other MLAs were at that event. What the young women were saying that day was, “What is in this for us? Why should we get involved in politics?” They were reluctant to do so rather than keen to find out. I think that this is an important issue, and maybe a more vibrant local government will help to address that perception, because you will have politics happening to a greater extent in local communities, more powers and so on.
104. There are broader issues as well. We are behind in a number of fundamental social policies that would help women into politics and into the labour market — issues such as childcare, which we have not really progressed to the extent that we need to yet, and transport. Northern Ireland is a rural area. If you are a woman with young children who is not living in Belfast and wants to be in the Assembly, I would say that it would be difficult for you to

do that. We are not doing enough yet, as a society, to accommodate working women and political women. Every system struggles with it, but I think we are still a bit behind. We have not made the progress that we would like to have made, or need to make, hence the fact that CEDAW keeps coming back to the need to implement the resolution or its principles. It talks about the need to introduce temporary special measures. We are making so little progress that we need to do something very particular and focused to address the situation.

105. **Mr Campbell:** I know that it is a topic that a number of people have had an interest in for a time, but I would like to ask you a question. About 20-odd years ago in the north-west, I started to hold open women’s meetings to try to get female participation and brought some of our better known females to the meetings. I found that there was very considerable interest at surface level. A lot of people came to the meetings and there was a lot of interest in the lack of female participation, but it seemed that it ended at that point. Once you got below that surface and said, “Now that we have all seen what the problem is and identified the nature of the difficulties, we can try and gauge people and see where they are, what they need to see, and what help they need to translate that from active acknowledgement of the problem to active participation and resolution of the problem”, that is where the problem seemed to emerge. I do not know whether there was a glass ceiling, but there was an issue that prevented acknowledgement turning into participation. Is that what you have found? Is that what you identified?
106. **Dr Gray:** Yes. We all acknowledged that there is a problem, and political parties here have acknowledged that there is a problem. Experience across the world has shown that sometimes it takes something like quotas — I know that quotas are not always very popular — to almost give the process an impetus and try to get that critical mass of people there.

107. We have a number of opportunities in Northern Ireland. Due to the history of policymaking here, we have non-departmental public bodies with very significant public responsibilities. The number of women in those bodies has been about 32% to 33% for a very long time — since the mid-1990s in fact. There was a significant increase from the 1980s to the 1990s, and then it just stopped.
108. The CEDAW Committee has continuously recommended that temporary special measures could be introduced in the appointments process. We do know something about the barriers there. There is the fact that the process can be seen as not being very transparent, the issue with people moving around quangos so that there is not the space that there could be sometimes, that more could be done around mentoring and shadowing, that more could be done with regard to how the actual jobs are described, and so on. There is also the remuneration, and there could be childcare costs and travel costs. I see those as steps that could be taken, and taken quite quickly. If the number of women in public bodies could be increased, that might also feed through to local government and the Assembly, because it is decision-making in the broadest sense.
109. **Mr Campbell:** Yes; however, knowing some of the people, I know that there has been an increase in middle-class women coming through, but there does not seem to be the same increase in working-class women.
110. **Dr Gray:** No, and it has not been enough of an increase to really change the overall figure very much, and it is also something to do with where women are located. The visibility of women is really important, and Paula touched on that. If women and young women are not seeing other women on public bodies, Assembly Committees and so on, in substantial numbers, what have they got to aspire to? What is there to encourage them to say that that could be them?
111. **Mr Campbell:** There is the horrendous ongoing issue nationally of the 200 females who were kidnapped in Nigeria, which, hopefully, will be resolved. Does that type of issue not give you a headline to raise the problem in the international arena? Awful as it is with regard to the safety and security problem, does it not provide an opportunity for it to become a cause célèbre almost? Have you done anything on that?
112. **Dr Gray:** The interesting thing about this was the fact that, as you know, it was a number of days before it was reported widely by the international media. It was reported when a woman from one of the NGOs in that country contacted the international group that she had links with, and she spoke on 'Woman's Hour' and on the media across the world. One of the things that she said really struck me. She said that we all know that if a child goes missing in the UK, Ireland or France it is all over the media, and a lot of effort is put into finding that one child. She said that 200 children there have been kidnapped and are missing, it took the international media days to report it, and she had to encourage them to raise the issue.
113. Yes, Mr Campbell, I think you are right. That is happening. It is happening with the groups that we link to in our work in the UN and the European Union. There is the issue of women and girls being protected and their entitlement to education, work, not to live in poverty and to be part of decision-making. That brings us back to where we started, which is for the UN to realise that the best way of shoring that up, if you like, in countries that are unstable or post-conflict is to have equal representation of women at the highest level.
114. **Mr Campbell:** I have one last question. It is slightly tongue-in-cheek. You talked about getting representation on the group. Did you ever think about getting an easier name? That might be a wee bit of a help.
115. **Ms P Bradley:** You are absolutely right. We have discussed that in the group,

- and we feel that the way forward is for the group to change its name, look at 1325, pick out something from that and move it forward. You are absolutely right, Gregory: when I talk to anyone about 1325 they look at me blankly and tell me that they have not got a clue what I am talking about. You are absolutely right.
116. **Dr Gray:** Interestingly, it is all about education. I cannot remember when we started this work — it was around 2000 — but when we talked about the resolution then, even people in the NGO sector looked at us blankly. Now, whenever officials in OFMDFM get responses to consultations, such as the childcare or gender equality strategies, the UN resolution is all over them. There has been a lot of education and awareness and it has worked in the sector. That could also be increased politically.
117. **Mr Beggs:** Thank you for your presentation. I support your model of encouraging women to become active in their local communities and community organisations. There is then a natural progression to local politics and, ultimately, the Assembly and higher. I think that that is the correct model.
118. Women have a critical role to play, particularly in disadvantaged communities where there is a very weak community infrastructure. I certainly agree with the point that we can help to create a more stable and better community if we have a stable community infrastructure. I have seen that women have a vital role to play in that; we just need more of it and more women to become involved.
119. Women feel passionately about the education of their children, road safety issues and a number of other issues. You need a hook to get people involved; they need an issue. It is not just that they want to be active and, because they are women, they want to represent women. Something that affects them and their families tends to be something that motivates them. If we had more support and encouragement, I think that more women would get involved and would be allowed the space to play that important role in their communities and develop further. Thank you.
120. **Mr Rogers:** You are very welcome. I fully support what you are doing. The SDLP is very supportive of enhancing the role of women.
121. The key to this is the role of women, particularly those in local government. It was good to see the representation of women on councils up in all the parties, including my party. You have talked about role models and they become role models for some of our community people to aspire to local government.
122. The key thing is how women will be facilitated in their role in local government, particularly in rural areas. Our local government areas are now much bigger and, in my area, it could be up to a four-hour round trip to meetings etc. How can women be fulfilled and what can we do to fulfil them in their role of delivering local government? What do we need to do?
123. **Ms P Bradley:** A lot of the issues about how representatives will get around, the time commitments and everything else are not just women's issues: they are men's issues too. However, we have to add on the fact that women generally look after the childcare, the elder care, or whatever it might be, in their families. That puts added pressures on. I think that councils will have to look at that, the timings of their meetings, where they will take place and all those issues.
124. I absolutely agree that councils are one of the best places. Now that our councils have changed and we have our super councils, they will be even more involved in the structure and planning of communities. We will have some really effective role models working in our local councils, across all the parties.
125. We cannot detract from the Assembly either. We are the ones who are on the TV news at night-time. We are the ones who women see every night on TV or hear on the radio. Yet again, there are so few of us that the role is not being

put across. We have some great role models in the Assembly. We have female Ministers, female Chairs of Committees, and lots of female representation here who are great role models. We have women at MEP level as well, so it is there.

126. I agree with you that because of the changes in local councils we will see a lot of women involved in the making and structuring of their communities, and how those will change. However, when it comes to demographics, it is a male and female issue as to how that will work.

127. **Dr Gray:** We have an opportunity now with local government. Some of it has been lost, we would argue, in terms of the transition committees for example, which were not gendered. We need to make sure that how the new councils operate is conducive to women participating, that issues around childcare are dealt with and that the timings and logistics are confronted.

128. Some of the other issues you raise are such fundamental issues of gender inequality inside and outside families. This is work in progress, if you like, because we cannot really, arguably, have gender equality in political life or in the workplace until we have it in the home. Whenever Paula says it is a male issue as well, it is a male issue in more ways than one.

129. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thanks very much, Ann Marie and Paula. Of course, the all-party group is well-placed with yourself on this Committee, Paula, to bring forward any suggestions, proposals or whatever during our review. Thanks very much to both of you. I am sure we will hear more from you. Go raibh maith agaibh.

24 June 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
 Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Roy Beggs
 Ms Paula Bradley
 Mr Gregory Campbell
 Mr Paul Givan
 Mr Raymond McCartney
 Mr Seán Rogers
 Ms Caitríona Ruane

Witnesses:

Professor Yvonne Galligan *Queen's University
 Belfast*

130. **The Chairperson:** I welcome Professor Yvonne Galligan to the Committee and ask her to begin her presentation.
131. **Professor Yvonne Galligan (Queen's University Belfast):** Thank you very much, Chairperson and members, for the invitation to speak to this issue.
132. I prepared a paper on academic models of good practice in other legislatures and how they might be adopted in the Northern Ireland Assembly. That was my focus in addressing the Committee's review. I reviewed a wide range of academic literature and reports from other Parliaments and international bodies that have been dealing with the issue of women in politics.
133. In broad terms, supporting women in politics in a parliamentary setting is usually considered under three headings. The first area is about ensuring that equal opportunities for women and men are provided in a parliamentary setting and in the working procedures of legislatures. The second area looks at the space and scope for the articulation of women's interests and the representation of women's concerns on the parliamentary agenda. The third area deals with the outputs of parliamentary and legislative processes, which is the production of legislation

that is sensitive to the needs, interests and perspectives of women and men in the community.

134. My briefing paper took those three areas and examined different measures that are either recommended in academic literature or used in practice in other Assemblies. With internal parliamentary working procedures, that entails examining the way an Assembly or legislature works and the scope for the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities for elected representatives. That can be not only related to maternity and paternity leave but broadened to incorporate other caring responsibilities that women and men, as elected representatives, may have and that members of the parliamentary support service may also have.
135. There are issues about a Parliament as a workplace. Good practices to combat sexual harassment and to address women's under-representation in Assembly structures are part and parcel of that.
136. As for the space for women's concerns on the parliamentary agenda, there appear to be quite a number of practices internationally, and there is also a lot of thinking on the issue internationally. It appears that the formation of cross-party caucuses of women elected representatives is a mechanism that is often considered with varying degrees of formality. There are certainly challenges in building and sustaining cross-party consensus and caucuses, but nonetheless there are plenty of practices where they can happen and be sustained.
137. There are other wider cross-parliamentary networks, such as the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. That provides a space for the articulation, development and pinpointing of specific issues that

- women parliamentarians can work on together in their own settings.
138. The final area is, as I said, the production of gender-sensitive legislation, whereby parliamentarians — women and men together — work towards developing policies or being aware of the gendered implications and impacts of the policies and decisions that they take. There are a number of tools for measuring and supporting that, such as gender budgeting, and there are a number of ways to bring a diversity of perspectives into the work of parliamentary Committees and legislative Committees more generally, such as looking at the gender balance in the membership of Committees.
139. I go through those measures in some detail in the briefing paper. I conclude that the Assembly may wish to pose the question to itself about the extent to which women's issues and concerns are included in parliamentary working procedures, the extent to which there is space for women's concerns on the parliamentary agenda and the extent to which the Assembly is geared to developing gender-sensitive legislation.
140. Arising from those three questions that the Committee may wish to consider, the level of which will depend on its view, I come to a number of considerations that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee may wish to consider. The first is where the Assembly stands on the three aspects of a gender-sensitive institution that I outlined earlier. The second is the development of an action plan based on the Committee's responses to and views and reflections on the three areas. The third is the possibility of conducting a gender audit to identify problems and issues about women's participation in the Assembly. The fourth is how, on a cross-Committee basis, the Assembly can be fine-tuned in its work as a gender-sensitive body. The fifth is to review Assembly practices for Members and staff on policies and procedures. If there are gaps, what are they? What policies need to be put in place to fill those gaps? The sixth is to explore how to facilitate a gender-mainstreaming view to inform all Committee business so that it takes account of the gendered effects of policy and legislation. The final consideration is to look at the scope for the professional development of MLAs and Assembly staff and how a gender-aware component can be built into that process.
141. I conclude this brief presentation by saying that legislatures, elected Assemblies and academic institutions such as universities are looked at by others in society as beacons of good practice. Academia and the Assembly, as a representative body, have a level of responsibility towards wider society to develop best practice to be a role model. If it cannot happen in those arenas, it is much more difficult for it to happen in other arenas in wider society.
142. **The Chairperson:** Thank you, Professor Galligan. I will open up the discussion and give members the opportunity to ask questions. Your briefing paper refers to a critical mass of 33% of women being required in a legislative Assembly to have some effect. Why 33%? What is the significance of that? We sit well below that percentage here at the moment.
143. **Professor Galligan:** The figure of one third or 33% comes from organisational studies and academic political studies that suggest that an organisation or a body's agenda becomes diversified and more inclusive when the under-represented group, whoever that is, reaches 33% in that group. That is why 33% is seen as a critical mass. It comes from organisational studies that found that agendas widen, broaden and diversify to become more inclusive at that point. That is why I chose that figure.
144. **Mr Campbell:** I am sorry for being a bit late, Chairman. Some of the material is very interesting, including interest in politics in Northern Ireland and various changes. I note that the interest in politics by gender shows significant continuous female under-representation, but for some reason there was a dip or a change between 2005 and 2007. Is there an explanation for that? Do you

- know why that would have been the case in that short period?
145. **Professor Galligan:** I am not really sure what the underlying drivers of those dips were during that period. There was, of course, some instability in the institutions around that time, and that could possibly have been a contributor to public disengagement. The percentage of women interested in politics — around 40% — pretty much remained the same between 2005 and 2007, although there was a dip from 1998.
146. Are we looking at the same thing?
147. **Mr Campbell:** I am looking at the graph, “Why is it an issue in NI?”. That seems to show that, while there is a general downward trend between 2005 and 2007 for women, the interest went up from 55% to 64%. I just wondered —
148. **Professor Galligan:** It went up from 55% to 64% for men.
149. **Mr Campbell:** Did women remain static?
150. **Professor Galligan:** Women remained static because, when people were standing back, and there was a little bit of disengagement in 2005, women did not return to engage when the Assembly institutions got up again whereas men did. Men re-engaged and women did not.
151. **Mr Campbell:** To what do you attribute the more recent downward trend, which looks as if it is recommencing what it did in 1998 through to 2005 for both genders, or is it just a general political malaise?
152. **Professor Galligan:** I think that there is an element of being tired of politics and engaging with the political agenda among women and men at this time. Remember that it is very difficult to sustain the levels of engagement that one found in 1998. The 42% for men is very similar to the level of engagement across the UK. All the Hansard Society audits of political engagement, which do not include Northern Ireland but look across the water, show that the general level of engagement for men is around 40% to 45%, which is very similar to Northern Ireland.
153. **Mr Campbell:** Is 25% similar for women?
154. **Professor Galligan:** No, it is not. It is a little lower for women across the water — between 35% and 40% — but it is significantly lower in Northern Ireland.
155. **Ms Ruane:** Go raibh maith agat. It is very useful for us to have all these papers. A significant amount of work is involved, and I want to acknowledge that. We had a very interesting visit to the Welsh Parliament about two weeks ago, and we learned about the cross-party group. The Presiding Officer in Wales was very keen on such a group. Will you outline some of its benefits? I do not need it today, but it would be useful to have a comparison with the South of Ireland and the interest in politics there. New legislation on gender quotas means that there is a changing demographic, and the next general election in the South will be very interesting. Will you comment on gender quotas and their importance?
156. **Professor Galligan:** Thank you very much for those substantive questions. Other Parliaments with cross-party working have found that they are able to identify issues of specific concern to women in their community — I use the word “community” in the broadest sense. Women, as citizens, in spite of many political or party political differences, can often go beyond those differences to recognise that there are issues of common concern. The implementation of universal credit here, for example, mobilised women across all parties and in the community to express how that policy would impact on them and on their lives. A cross-party women’s group is enabled to bring those common issues into the parliamentary or legislative arena and have them discussed there. There are many other examples.
157. I will move on to women’s representation. In the Polish Parliament, for example, the women’s cross-parliamentary group worked together to bring the issue of women’s under-

- representation to the legislature and, in 2011, succeeded in changing the electoral law to provide for quotas on the list system. There is a background to that because it took four attempts. It was not always brought by the women's cross-parliamentary group, but it was the fourth time that it had come before the legislature. The participation of women as a cross-parliamentary caucus in that regard was the issue that finally made it possible for that law to be passed.
158. One of the concerns that many women have and that underlies the 25% interest that we were speaking about a few moments ago has to do with the fact that many women feel that politics is not a space that holds much relevance for their life. Yet everybody around this table knows that politics and political decision-making are central to everybody's life. One of the reasons why women feel disengaged from politics is that they feel that their voices are not necessarily heard. A cross-parliamentary, cross-Assembly, women's caucus can provide that voice in the Assembly and in the legislative setting, and can do imaginative things with Departments and other Committees in order to be able to bring what women in the community are saying into the parliamentary arena. So, there are lots of imaginative ways of doing it.
159. I imagine that in Wales there was a lot of energy around this issue because of the fact that women now have a voice and a channel into the legislative arena that they did not necessarily have before, in a structured way.
160. I will have to come back to the Committee regarding interest in politics in the South by gender, because that will require a little bit of digging around.
161. On gender quotas and their importance, women's under-representation is a really difficult structural problem for the political system. It is no longer so much about supporting women and providing them with the confidence and supports to run in political life. That is being done and has been done for, I would suggest, the last 20 years in a very sustained and systematic way. Yet, there has not been much of an increase in women's political representation on this island, as a whole.
162. The quota strategy opens a space for the culture and the structural obstacles to be removed, and for the culture to open up, which means that women get the opportunity to run that they would not necessarily have had before. Gender quotas are a very important instrument in opening that door. I very much see this as a door opening rather than a final solution. We find that when that door has opened, women's representation, after three elections, sustains itself in a more gender balanced way.
163. There are many other supporting measures that need to be put in place as well as gender quotas. As the Polish experience shows, women's representation went up to 24% in the election following the list quota. There need to be a lot of supports, like awareness-raising, development of women, and encouraging women to come forward, that go alongside the gender quota.
164. I think that that is why the Women for Election group in the South has been very successful. At least half of the candidates who ran at local government level in the South were alumni, if you like, of the programme. It is making an impact. It is a fast track. It is very good for political parties to have that fast-tracking mechanism and support, because political parties will be looking for women candidates for their quota. So, they go hand in hand.
165. **Mr Beggs:** I will pick up on your latter comments. I very much support providing additional encouragement and support for women to have the confidence to put themselves forward, because sometimes that has been a problem. I have recognised some very capable candidates who have not felt comfortable enough to come forward. That support and encouragement needs to continue.
166. In your document, you said:
"There is scope for gender mainstreaming Committee business, so that outputs are gender-sensitive."

167. Can you give me an example of where that has worked elsewhere or how it would work practically in some of our Committees? I am on the Health Committee, and we are looking at the June monitoring round bids. How does that issue come in? We are generally interested in everybody's health or everybody's road. I am trying to understand how that mechanism would work.
168. **Professor Galligan:** Essentially, gender mainstreaming of Committee business would mean looking at the Committee business and taking into account the needs, interests and perspectives of women and men in that business. You raised the issue of health. Let us say, for example, that there was a no-smoking campaign — smoking being one of the major contributors to health inequalities, heart disease and all of that. When one looks at that issue with a gender mainstreaming approach, one sees that young women are much more likely to be smokers than young men. Therefore, in any considerations that the Committee may want to make about how resources are distributed, it might say that we need a specific campaign targeted at preventing young women from beginning to smoke, but that we need a specific campaign directed towards encouraging older men to give up smoking. In considering the gendered nature and the impact of the policy on citizens, it can use the resources to target where the actual problems are between women and men. It is not always about taking from one and giving to another; it is about addressing the different perspectives, experiences, habits and behaviours of women and men.
169. I mentioned the Mexican Parliament as an example. When the Mexican Parliament scrutinises its budget, the Finance Committee in the Mexican Parliament has the capacity, supported by its secretariat obviously, to take the government budget and look to see how the budget spend breaks down in its allocation of resources to women and to men in the community. For example, in the education section, does it address early male school leavers and focus money in that regard? Does it look at women's participation in science subjects in schools and target measures to support that? That is the kind of thing that a gender mainstreaming approach in Committee business can bring to the Committee's broader consideration.
170. I am not saying that it happens overnight. It requires a secretariat that is very aware of these issues and can provide the expertise to inform Committee members as to the gendered nature of it. It also brings a role for women and men representatives to be able to say that they can see, from their constituency work or from their observations more generally, that women and men citizens come with different views, perspectives and needs, as well as similar perspectives and needs, on issues. It is just about being a little more gender aware in the way that the work of the Committee is thought about and considered.
171. **The Chairperson:** Do members have any other questions?
172. **Mr McCartney:** I want to ask about the 25% interest in 2009. Is there an update figure on that? In terms of a comparison, would that be generally women's interest in politics across many jurisdictions?
173. **Professor Galligan:** These figures are taken from the Northern Ireland life and times survey. There has not been an update, unless there is a recent one. I hope that there may be, but the figure for 2009 was the last one that I was able to find in that regard. Is it similar to other jurisdictions? The answer is no; it is lower than other jurisdictions, by quite a bit.
174. **Ms Ruane:** I am sorry for taking up more time; I just have a small query. Sinn Féin recently brought in four new women to replace three men and one woman. I am trying to remember when we brought them in. Do these figures take that into account?
175. **Professor Galligan:** Those figures were correct as of March.

176. **Ms Ruane:** March this year?
 177. **Professor Galligan:** Yes. That is from the Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS).
 178. **Ms Ruane:** But it says 2012. Do you remember when it was, Raymond?
 179. **Mr McCartney:** It was before March, anyway.
 180. **Professor Galligan:** I will check that again, but I was trying to hold the comparisons equally across the board. In fact, these figures, now I recollect, are the results of the elections. These are the election results at a particular point in time. Some elections were in 2011 and some elections for these Assemblies were in 2012; that is why there is a difference.
 181. **Ms Ruane:** That is fine. It might be useful to note that some of our MPs were also MLAs, so we put new people in. I am saying that because I think that you will see a bit of a shift in that graph, which is a good thing and we need to celebrate that.
 182. We have a young woman of 22 who is an MLA, and, when she comes to a meeting with me, I can see young women perking up immediately. We also need to look at age. I am probably one of the oldest women here. We need that mix of age profile as well, so that younger people can see it. The same goes for men, but we have a lot of young men in Stormont. I just wanted to make that comment about age profile.
 183. **Professor Galligan:** I will just make a small response to that, because you brought out a very relevant point, which is the role model effect of women in politics and that of young women. Studies have been done — they are mostly to do with the Westminster elections — that show that, when a woman MP is elected or even when a woman is running and is a prospective winner, women's interest in politics increases. When a woman is elected, women's interest in politics in that constituency increases whether they support that woman's party or not.
- It seems to have an overall effect. It also has a particularly strong effect on teenage girls and, interestingly, on teenage boys, who become more interested in politics when they see women being in politics. It is a more pronounced effect for teenage girls, though, and all of that is about capturing representation and increasing the engagement of citizens with political life.
184. **The Chairperson:** OK. Professor Galligan, thank you very much for taking the time to present to us today.
 185. **Professor Galligan:** Thank you very much indeed. I wish the Committee the very best of luck in its endeavours.

16 September 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
 Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Roy Beggs
 Ms Paula Bradley
 Mr Gregory Campbell
 Mr Paul Givan
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Mr Seán Rogers
 Ms Caitríona Ruane

Witnesses:

Ms Annie Campbell	<i>Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland</i>
Ms Anne McVicker	<i>Women's Resource and Development Agency</i>
Ms Lynn Carvill	<i>Women's TEC</i>

186. **The Chairperson:** We now have a briefing from Anne McVicker, who is a director of the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), which supports women's groups and organisations with training and campaigning on key issues that affect women here. Ms McVicker is accompanied by Lynn Carvill, the chief executive of Women's TEC, and Ms Annie Campbell, the director of Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland.

187. I remind members that Hansard will record this session. I welcome Ms McVicker, Ms Carvill and Ms Campbell and ask them to make their presentation. After the presentation, members will have an opportunity to ask questions.

188. Ladies, I apologise at the outset; unfortunately, I have to leave to attend another event upstairs, but the Deputy Chair will take over. Thank you very much. Feel free to go ahead and begin when you are ready.

189. **Ms Anne McVicker (Women's Resource and Development Agency):** Thank you very much for the invitation. We are here to represent the views of WRDA's membership, which stands at over 800, and the Women's Consortium, which is made up of the Training for Women Network, the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network, the Foyle Women's Information Network, Women's TEC and the Women's Support Network, and is also reflective of the Ad Hoc Women's Policy Group.

190. It has often been cited that the traditional barriers to getting more women into politics have been the lack of affordable and accessible childcare; the fact that women are seen as carers and so take a step back in their careers to look after children; a lack of confidence, because they maybe have been out of the workforce for a while; and the fact that there is continuing employment discrimination.

191. (The Deputy Chairperson [Mr Sheehan] in the Chair)A really key issue is that the culture of politics is seen as problematic to many women. It is often male, often seen as aggressive and adversarial. Given the experience over the past years, it is felt that much of politics is about playing games. Many women simply do not like that and, consequently, they are more likely to get involved in community action and development rather than formal political life or related decision-making agencies.

192. We feel that there needs to be more female role models in political life. Having more women in politics would make politics more inclusive and transparent. The important contribution offered in Ireland by having two women presidents has been cited as a very positive example, as have some of the mechanisms in the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly that have brought more women into politics.

193. We feel that there needs to be a commitment to increase the number of women in political and public life and that that should be stated in the Programme for Government and complemented in a range of measurable actions. Actions by Governments and political parties in Northern Ireland should tackle the under-representation of women and build women's leadership and visibility to enrich democracy, policy debate and decision-making.
194. When considering strategies to increase the representation of women in politics, we need to ensure that it applies to all women, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds and disadvantaged communities. Within five years, measures should be put in place to provide for a significant increase in the number of women in political parties in the Assembly. We also think that the Civic Forum, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement, should be restored with gender balanced representation.
195. I now invite Lynn and Annie to contribute.
196. **Ms Lynn Carvill (Women's TEC):** Thank you very much. There are a couple of points that I would like to raise with the Committee. Some are maybe outside the remit of the Committee and the Assembly, but they are very important in recognising the barriers that women face.
197. Prior to holding my current position, I worked as a lobbyist for the WRDA for five years. I worked with women politicians up here and worked to support them. It was very clear to me at that time that candidate selection is a huge barrier to getting women into politics. It really matters who is on the ballot paper. In the 2011 Assembly election, we had five constituencies in Northern Ireland that had only one woman on the ballot paper, and one constituency, Newry and Armagh, had none. So, when the electorate is faced with that, it really does not have a diverse choice about who to vote for.
198. Another issue that I would like to raise is about a very successful and well-attended conference that the WRDA ran in 2011, entitled "How to Elect More Women in Northern Ireland". One of the Committee members, Paula, spoke at that conference. It was an in-depth look at what the barriers are to women and how we can get women to run. One of the things that really struck me was that every MLA at that conference said that they were asked by someone in their political parties to run. Men are asked between one and two times before they decide to say yes. Women are asked between five and 10 times before they decide to say yes. There are very simple things that political parties can do in asking women to stand for election. There is an effort that needs to come from that end.
199. I will leave it to my colleague Annie to talk about positive action, but I suggest that there are some things that the Assembly could do to enhance the situation. One is to have a gender action plan across the Assembly. What has also proven to work in the past is resource training for existing and potential female MLAs. That happened in the 1990s, when DemocraShe delivered training, and I believe that MLAs said that it was very successful in getting women into the Assembly.
200. We also need to do more work to attract young women. Last year, the WRDA, along with Politics Plus, organised the pop-up political academy for young women, and I know that another Committee member spoke at that. It was very successful, and we got young women from schools in to try to enthuse them about politics, but there needs to be a jump to link that with the political parties.
201. In equality law and legislation, there is no paid parental leave for anyone in the Assembly. If that could be brought in, it would be good. I would really advocate that. I would also advocate job-sharing for MLAs. If you want to diversify the representation of the Assembly, that is one way that you could move forward. I cannot say how that would be worked

- out legally, but I think that it would really work.
202. Finally, before I pass over to my colleague, I want to note something. When I left my job as a lobbyist, the pressure and expectation that half of the community in Northern Ireland place on the women who are here became very clear to me. Female MLAs deal with everything that the men deal with, but there is an extra pressure in what women expect of them. I think that that has to be noted. Thank you.
203. **Ms Annie Campbell (Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland):** Good morning. I echo my colleagues' thanks for inviting us here. For those of you who do not know, the Women's Aid Federation is a member of the WRDA and works closely with it in the all the communities of disadvantaged women and others. As you know, our work spreads across all communities, including Stormont.
204. I am delighted to be here. As cited in your briefing paper, which is very comprehensive, it is very clear that there is unfinished business with the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement regarding the commitment to give women the right to full and equal political participation. That just has not happened. Frankly, I think that it is a collective disgrace that we have this wonderful new Assembly, which we hope will keep going, yet it is ranked as 70th in world in women's participation. There are proven methods to do something about that and, if it is not done, one can only assume that there is an institutionalised bias against having women up here. I say that because that is what women who I meet across my work say. They ask why women are not there and why their issues are not here in greater force. I say that with respect to all the male MLAs who support our work. It is excellent that the Committee is looking at this issue. We are delighted to see that happening.
205. I want to briefly refer the Committee to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. It has a six-step action plan — it is a very comprehensive report from across western Europe. A lot of what is in those six points have been echoed in what my colleagues said and in other research that has been developed through Queen's and so on. I am sure that much of that has been put before the Committee, but, if not, we can certainly send it to you.
206. Those points start with constitutional rights, and thank God we have those. We hope that they are secured. The second point is the electoral system. I see that that is outside the brief of the Committee, but I would like to point out that that is a proven method of getting women in. It was not embedded in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, but the reality is that it is harder to get women in without it as they are not in the traditional old boys' networks. So, things like regional lists get women into Parliaments and Assemblies.
207. The third main plank of the report was about legal quotas: either to reserve seats for women or to have gender quotas. I know that that can be a very contested matter in this community, but if we look at the outworkings of Patten, what happened with our police service, how they are working with the community — they certainly work credibly well with Women's Aid across Northern Ireland — and how welcomed they are in most communities, we see that it is a success. Instead of waiting for 100 years when the tide will turn or the room will get warm for everyone, we took action. The reality is that politics and the way that it is structured means that it is a cold house for women. That is a catchphrase for it on all sorts of levels: attitudinal levels; structural levels; and matters around the recruitment and selection of candidates. You need a step change. To those who would say that that means discriminating against men, I would say that you would need to ask some men to realise that they have to step aside. If you want 50% women here, it means that there will be fewer men. That is the reality. If the situation was reversed and there were 22 men up here, I am

- quite confident that the view across the whole women's sector would be to have quotas. I would call for quotas — we would. We want balance. That is what we need to have a good, sound Government.
208. There is also the matter of reviewing party rules, which Lynn has touched on, and recruitment procedures. Obviously, this Committee cannot legislate that into parties, but it could strongly recommend it. There could be a kind of shame-and-blame culture, if you like, so that it is no longer acceptable not to have women on lists and going forward for winnable seats.
209. The fifth point is around capacity development. Again, my colleagues touched on mentoring programmes, skills, training and funding for women candidates. All of these are incredibly important. I add a rider to that to the effect that I would not like anyone to go away thinking that women in general do not have an appetite for politics. They do. It is evidenced every day across all the communities, where there is such strong community development work, often led by women. In my own area of work, which is around support for victims of sexual and domestic violence, women, when they are long enough in that role, get very political and very angry about what is and what is not being done in their community. That is political to me, and they are the issues that we want to see up here in greater numbers and in more depth.
210. The last thing, which, again, has been touched on by my colleagues, is parliamentary reform. That can be about facilities, working conditions and hours of sittings, which is very important. That applies to political parties as well as not always asking women to come out at teatime when the kids are looking for their dinner or whatever. It can also be about childcare facilities. Some of these things have happened in Scotland and in Wales, but they are kind of absent here.
211. I totally appreciate that there are many men up here who are champions of our work and also of gender equality, and they often feel that you are accusing them personally of wanting to discriminate against women. In some cases, there will be embedded old notions, and they need to be unearthed, but, in a lot of cases, it is simply that they do not recognise the kind of attitudinal and normal behaviour. If you get a room and it is mostly men, there is a certain atmosphere. It is the same if you get a room and it is mostly women. You are acting within that without even realising that you are actually making it a bit complicated for the two or three women who are in the room. The same thing would apply if people were coming from another ethnic background. They are the things that need challenged. You cannot challenge them yourself; you actually have to listen to people who are nailing it and saying, "This is why that is uncomfortable" or, "That joke would make women feel uncomfortable" and all the rest of it.
212. Finally, as I said, there are many people who are helping us to champion domestic and sexual violence issues, but, often, it can start slipping unless we in Women's Aid and in civic society, if you like, keep pushing it and pushing it. We have seen in Scotland and Wales, with the tremendous numbers of women that they have in their Parliament and Assembly, that those issues do not slip but get embedded. I mean that they get embedded with really large budgets, because, at the end of the day, if money does not go where the policy priorities are, the work does not really get done. Again, there is lots of research to say that, if women get into parliaments, the bread and butter issues, which are the issues that really affect the communities, get higher up the agenda. That has to be a big win for everyone.
213. Some of those matters cannot be waved away with a magic wand by you. We appreciate that, but it is more than just a question of whether one woman somewhere can become an MLA. This is a whole business about how we run society and how we make it truly democratic.
214. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thanks very much, Anne, Lynn and Annie for your

- very robust presentation. I will throw it open to questions in a minute. I believe that most people here would like to see greater representation from women in the Assembly. There may be disagreement on how we bring that about, but this Committee is studying other institutions, including Wales, which you mentioned, and Scotland. We are also looking at Finland and Iceland, which have much higher representations of women in their assemblies or parliaments. So, at least we are looking at the issue, and, hopefully, something positive will come out at the other end. Lynn, you mentioned the issue of job-sharing. Can you expand on that a bit? Are you talking about someone who is elected as an MLA sharing that role? If a man was elected, could you bring a woman in to share that role?
215. **Ms Carvill:** This has come to my attention. It has always been around as an idea, but it has come to my attention more recently. Someone was hoping to run for the Labour Party in GB and did not run because they have a disability, and they knew they would have to job-share, but that did not really exist. I think that there are probably various ways you could run it, but I suppose for the electorate and democracy and all of that, it would need to be that two people run for one seat. So, you would have to have two people running for one position, obviously, from the same party. That is the way that it would work. I know that, in the past, people have said that that cannot work, but my question is always be, "Why could that not work?". It would allow for people who either have other responsibilities outside here or who maybe cannot work full time.
216. **Mr Beggs:** Some votes are party votes and other votes are on issues of conscience. If it was an issue of conscience, which of the two people on a job-share would be able to exercise their right on a vote of conscience? There are practical steps and things that could cause a difficulty. I am just trying to see how you would practically deal with such a scenario.
217. **Ms Carvill:** That question is very far down the line because most votes are party votes. It is possibly like job-sharing in any scenario in that you would have to have people who are able to work together, because that is the way the situation works. That problem is quite far down the line. Or you could go half and do fractions. You could possibly do it that way.
218. **Mr Beggs:** It seems very, very complicated.
219. **Ms Carvill:** I do not think that it would immediately negate the idea.
220. **Mr Givan:** I apologise for being late, and I have to go again because there is justice legislation going through; I need to be in the Chamber for that. I know the work of your organisation well, and you have come to the Justice Committee on a number of occasions. Our party is making great strides in advancing female candidates and has been successful at having them elected, but the issue of women's rights obviously cannot be advanced only by female politicians, and Lord Morrow is taking through a Bill that your organisation has been very supportive of. How do you deal with trying to advance the issues that are important to you and your organisation when often, and on this issue, some female politicians are very opposed to what your organisation believes in?
221. **Ms A Campbell:** That is always the case. Issues do not always divide according to gender by any means. As I said, we really appreciate the support that we get from the male MLAs, who take forward a lot of our issues. If you look at it in the round, in Scotland and Wales, where you have a greater mass of women MLAs, you find that some of those issues are higher up the agenda, such as, for example, domestic and sexual violence. There still may be differences within that as to how to take it forward, but the actual issues get more prominence. There can then be the same political disagreements among women and across the parties as there would be with anything. We

- are very fortunate that, in the domestic and sexual violence field, there is a lot of cross-party support. However, when you get, for example, to the issue of Lord Morrow's Bill, which is about how prostitution is perceived in society and so on, there can be differences based on moral ethics, how you view human rights, and so on, and that will still be a matter for political debate. If you had a greater mass of women in here, you would have more support for the position that Lord Morrow is taking, which we support.
222. **Mr Lunn:** We get a lot of figures around the level of representation, which is clearly appalling up here, and the level of interest in politics from women around the world. I notice that Southern Ireland still has particularly poor levels, if it can be believed.
223. To take it right back to basics, I do not know what other parties do, but if somebody wants to be a candidate in our party, they have to be a party member and they submit their name to the headquarters. That is then vetted and sent back to the local association and it selects the candidates for council, MLA or even for MP. I have no figures here for the level of female membership of political parties. I do not mean representation but actual voting membership.
224. I had a quick look at our membership lists. It is not so much that they are heavily dominated by men but the fact that men's wives do not appear to join. The men join the party but the wife or partner does not. If there was a greater female membership in political parties — there is not a huge number in any of the parties — surely that would feed through and would evolve into more female candidates. A higher female membership, if you want to vote that way, would bring forward more female representatives.
225. About 20 years ago, we tried to introduce quotas for females on selection lists. It was voted down at the specific request of our female membership; they would not have it. They said, "No way. It is merit or nothing". I think that we have gone beyond that now. Do you have any thoughts on that?
226. **Ms A Campbell:** A few.
227. **Ms Carvill:** You mentioned people coming forward. Some people do come forward. However, having spoken to such a variety of people who are politicians, I have learned that most people are asked. Most people in any of the parties are asked to run; it is just the way that the situation works. Some come forward.
228. I thought that this was something very specific to the women in political parties, but it is specific to men as well. Women may position themselves better but may not be asked to stand as much, even if a party is growing the number of women involved. Research is being done on this, particularly by Claire McGing at Maynooth. She has figures on party membership across Northern Ireland that show that it does not necessarily follow that women will come through. I think that they need to be asked a few times.
229. **Mr Lunn:** Other women could ask them. I am not being facetious here, but I think that, if you had what is referred to as critical mass, it would feed through eventually. I do not think that it is something that we can cure overnight.
230. **Ms McVicker:** You have to realise that there is an uneven playing field here. That may work, but other things would have to be put in place as well. First is the position of women in society as carers and who look after families. Maybe so many men are involved in politics because they have partners who are looking after them and looking after the home. With women who have not been involved, even in community action, you find that there is a lack of confidence.
231. To go back to what Lynn and Annie said: resources need to be put in place to invest in women to build up their confidence so they feel that they could actually take that extra step, but it is certainly a very uneven playing field.

232. **Mr Lunn:** I am entirely with you about facilities and resources being put in place in places like this to make it easier for parents to involve themselves. It may improve their confidence in putting themselves forward if there were childcare facilities and all the rest of it, proper timings and so on. It is not just the women who would like to see decent timings up here, believe me.
233. At the basic level, who goes forward for selection? You say that most people are asked, and I would say that that is true. If you display a bit of talent, the party comes to you, or you do not display a bit of talent but the party still comes to you and asks you whether you would like to stand. I do not see why that should not apply to men any more so than women.
234. **Ms A Campbell:** If you put yourself in that position, those of you who are men, in a room where most of your party officers are probably going to be men, where things have been done in a certain way for a long time, where no one has approached you and there are a few eager and potentially good candidates who are men who already have their hands up in the air saying publicly that they want to do it, you are not going to be the one who is chosen even though you could be the one who could make the better MLA. It has to be more managed than that.
235. Parties have to take responsibility. If you do not have a gender audit of who your membership is and how many women and men you have, you need to look at that and you need to look at what your processes are. It is the same with the way that things have changed now with selection for jobs. It is not just that somebody knocks on your door and says, “I want to do that job”; there are criteria, you go through an interview, and all of that has to be done by people who are independent and are not trying to get the favoured person in. Parties should be doing that as well as the rest of society. There should not be this kind of casual approach.
236. **Mr Lunn:** We are agreeing with you on that point. It is the parties that have the basic responsibility to do something about it.
237. **Ms Ruane:** Go raibh maith agat, a Cathaoirleach. You are very welcome. I just want to put on record my admiration for the work that each of you, personally and through your organisations, has done over the last while. I think the first time I met you, Anne, was probably about 30 years ago — would that be right? Secondly, there is not a thing you have said that I do not agree with. It is not an easy place to be. I am not going to pretend it is. I noticed a couple of people’s eyes light up when you talked about job-sharing. It will be lovely.
238. You raised a couple of queries. Your presentation was very focused, with a clear knowledge of how we operate here. I am a member of the Assembly Commission, and I have asked for the gender action plan in relation to the Assembly Commission. We have also proposed this investigation, inquiry or whatever we are calling it, and I believe that it is one of the most important things that this Committee will do. I think it is very important.
239. It is not enough to say that we just want people to put themselves forward. I know that no one in this room is saying that. I think that parties have to be proactive in setting quotas at every single level of the party, otherwise nothing will ever change. Nobody gives up power, no matter how progressive a party is. I believe that we need very strong quotas internally. I know that, when I sat on the Ard Chomhairle, when panels came to me with all men I was one of the voices saying, “That needs to go back. Where are the women?”.
240. Actually, I think it needs to go further than individual parties. There is legislation in the South — we will study what happens to it — that actually provides for financial penalties for parties. That is when parties start listening. They do not like losing money. I think we need to look at that. Although at the moment it is just a percentage of candidates, I would like to see winnable

- seats, because that is the way we are going to get changes.
241. We need the debate and the discussion, because there is probably much more common ground between all the parties. It is good for politics to have women in politics. At the moment this place is not good for politics or for women in politics. You are absolutely right. It is aggressive, adversarial, very male and older. We need to try to change that, and we have to be proactive in doing that.
242. I certainly look forward to working with you. We do not have all of the answers. What I will say is that it is great women being in the community, but often the decisions are being made here, so I throw a challenge back to the community and say that we need women like you in politics. That is a big step. I know, because I was in your situation in the community sector and it was the biggest step that I made in my life, but we need strong women from the community sector across all different backgrounds to come forward, particularly women in disadvantaged areas. That is a challenge that I am going to throw out to the community sector.
243. **Mr Lunn:** On the back of that, I noticed that in your presentation there was a comment that maybe women do not naturally find a place within one particular political party. Is there evidence for that?
244. **Ms McVicker:** I do not think we should assume that all women think the same. In the past there was certainly a role for the Women's Coalition in saying that more women needed to be involved in politics, but to think that all women should be part of one political party —
245. **Mr Lunn:** No, the party of their choice. The comment was about:
"Reluctance of women to adhere/represent one particular Party versus the difficulty in being heard outside the current party system."
246. I think that, realistically, any potential candidate who aspires to be, let us say, an MLA up here will have to connect themselves to a party.
247. **Ms McVicker:** Yes.
248. **Mr Lunn:** Male or female, it does not really matter. Your notes here seem to say that women have difficulty with that.
249. **Ms A Campbell:** There was evidence of that in some of the workshops and so on: that women do not actually want to get into what is left of the old divisive politics. Therefore, some of them are reluctant to enter one of the traditional parties, if you like, up here at the moment. They want to forge new ground on the bread-and-butter issues. However, I am not saying that that is the case for all of them; some of them are obviously clear supporters of clear parties. It is part of that shifting of the agenda, I suppose, towards what we share, what we can go forward on and what our real problems are — financial and all the rest of it. We are not trying to say that all women —
250. **Ms McVicker:** I do not think that women like to be boxed off and put in the one party. Women's views are representative of all the parties that exist.
251. **Mr Lunn:** Yes, but when you gravitate towards a political party, it does not mean that you — I will choose my words carefully — agree with every single item in its manifesto. You choose the one that most suits you. That is the same for men as for women. So, I do not buy this thinking that women have a problem effectively selecting a party. You mentioned the Women's Coalition. That was a good effort, but what happened to it?
252. **Ms McVicker:** It had its day. It achieved its objective, I believe. It is maybe not as relevant now as it was then.
253. **Mr Lunn:** Fair enough.
254. **Ms A Campbell:** It was formed for a specific purpose, which we feel we achieved. Given what Caitríona mentioned, I put that challenge back to you: how many parties are actively recruiting in disadvantaged areas? Have you asked those women to join your party? I do not know a lot of women who get asked.

255. **Mr Lunn:** I can only speak for my party, but the people who join our party are not necessarily asked. They join on the back of particular issues or events. It will not be a surprise to you to hear that, after the flags protest of December 2012, we recruited another, I think, 150 members in a few weeks, which was unprecedented for us. I am not making anything of that issue; it is just a fact. A lot of those 150 — a proportion of them, I am sure — were women. People are inspired to become involved in politics for different reasons, but sometimes they are asked — of course they are.
256. **Ms P Bradley:** Can I just come in on that point?
257. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Gregory is next, but if he is happy to give way, yes.
258. **Mr G Campbell:** Yes.
259. **Ms P Bradley:** Are you sure that you do not mind?
260. You have nearly answered it all; it is something I was going to ask you later on. In my experience when I have been out speaking to women's groups, a lot of them bring up this point: "What political party would I join?". I have tried to explain to them that everything that my party says, does and believes in is not necessarily everything that I believe in, but I believe in the ethos and the general principles of my party, and that is what attracted me to my party. The odd thing comes up where I will go, "Actually, no, I do not agree with that", and I will not even want to go to vote on it, but I have to, and that is part of being a member of a party.
261. Do you think that there is something that the parties could be doing more of? All our parties very much deal with the issues on the ground, but sometimes that does not get reflected out there. When people see the news at night or watch the Stormont TV programmes or whatever, they hear about the big constitutional issues a lot of the time. A lot of the issues are to do with parity, flags or whatever it might be. However, the media are not portraying all the other issues that we discuss at Committee level, in the Chamber and in various other meetings in this Building, which are actually the issues that affect those men and women who live in all areas of our communities. I think that the parties maybe are at fault here for not putting that out a bit more and for not putting the message out a bit more that those are the issues that we are discussing and that are important to us.
262. All you hear about on the TV is the big, big issues, but the small issues are the important ones, because they are the ones that we build on. They are our bedrock. They are what we come from. All our political parties were formed on those issues. I think that there is a job of work for us to do, as political parties, to get those women in. When they speak to me, they will say, "But your party is more interested in this" or "Another party is doing that." I tell them that that is not what we are about and that that is not what we discuss. We discuss education, health and all the other issues that affect them. I think that there is a bit of work to be done by political parties and probably a need for a better education system, but I will come to that afterwards when it is my turn to come in.
263. **Ms McVicker:** I agree with you, Paula. I think that there is probably more of an onus on female politicians to engage with communities and to do what you have done with our organisation. You came and spoke to us about there being no peace without women and UN resolution 1325. It is about being engaging in a very down-to-earth way. The feedback that we got from the conference at the end of June was that it is not just about the big issues that you hear about on the TV like the constitutional issues; it is the bread-and-butter issues. Our membership wants to hear that those issues are important.
264. **Mr G Campbell:** There are a couple of things that I would like to get your views on. You spoke about the adversarial nature of politics, and a couple of MLAs also raised that issue. It is very clear that that would be off-putting, and it

- has been there for quite some time. If you look at that and accept that — I think that most people do — you would imagine that the converse would be true and that, when there were occasions in the comparatively recent past when it appeared to the wider public that adversarial politics was going to be replaced by a more all-embracing political life, more women would have come forward, just as there were not more when it was adversarial. Whether it was 1998 or 2007, would you not have expected, at that stage, when it appeared that adversarial politics was going to recede, that more women would have come forward? That did not seem to happen.
265. **Ms Carvill:** I am not sure. It would not be my view that, at both those times, adversarial politics actually receded. I think that it is still very much alive and well.
266. **Mr G Campbell:** Yes, but was the view not that it was going to happen? That is what I mean. In 1998 and 2007, there was a wider community view that the old sort of Punch and Judy politics was receding, because agreements had been reached. Would you not have expected more women to have got involved, if the reason for them not being involved was the adversarial politics that they had seen on their televisions or read about in their newspapers? Whatever happened afterwards, at that point, would they not have felt that those days were over and, therefore, that they wanted to get involved? That did not seem to happen.
267. **Ms Carvill:** People and women see on their televisions that it is still adversarial. There have been a number of occasions over the last few years in our Assembly Chamber when personal attacks, often on women by men, were seen as OK. That is not necessarily seen as OK in, let us say, Westminster. It goes back to what Paula said about the media. It has a stage here as well. It wants to report on what is sensational, not bread and butter. What we generally see on our televisions is that that adversarial nature still exists today. That is what the public see. That comes across in all of the community development work that we do with women, and it is one of the huge turn-offs. I do not believe that that corner has been turned.
268. **Mr G Campbell:** I am not going to press the point, Chairman. The only point that I would make is that what you are talking about is what has happened subsequent to those dates. I was talking about at the time. It is just like the way, in South Africa or elsewhere, millions of people queued up to vote because, at that time — it does not matter what happened afterwards — they felt “This is a new dawn, therefore we are queuing up. Millions of us are going to queue, because it is a different era.” The only point that I am making is that, in 1998 or 2007 — not what happened afterwards: not six months later when there was a row, two years later or 10 years later — I would have expected more women to get involved. They may have been turned off afterwards because of the adversarial approach, but you are giving your explanation.
269. **Ms A Campbell:** If I could just come in briefly on that point: when the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998, there was a huge wave of hope, and a lot of women wanted to be involved. From my perspective, two things happened. In the Good Friday Agreement, the electoral system that was agreed for this Assembly was the old one, which was not going to bring more women in. Although those arguments had been made to those who were making the deal, they were not heard. We did not get the regional lists and, as a point of fact, that was one of the reasons that led to the demise of the Women’s Coalition, although it got a couple of Members in originally. That was a big thing.
270. The second thing was that, come 2002 when we had the legislation from Westminster for the selection of candidates and so on, although it could be applied here, it was not applied. Nothing structural was done to bring those women in who wanted to come

- in. It was not the fault of the women because they did not want in. They wanted in, but doors were not opened for them. I think that the potential is still there; there are women out there who would want in to this Assembly who will not get in under the current set-ups.
271. **Mr G Campbell:** Prior to the 1998 agreement, there was a list system for the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue.
272. **Ms A Campbell:** Yes, there was. That was how the smaller loyalist parties got in, as well as the Women's Coalition and Labour.
273. **Mr G Campbell:** We did not see a big increase of females, despite using the list system on that occasion.
274. **Ms A Campbell:** Actually, it led to the fact that the Coalition was at the table. We would not have been there had it not been for that regional list system.
275. **Mr G Campbell:** But numerically, out of the numbers in the forum, it did not show a big increase.
276. **Ms A Campbell:** That is then down to the parties, who were not putting women forward.
277. **Ms Ruane:** Some of them.
278. **Ms A Campbell:** It is a shared —
279. **Mr G Campbell:** On the issue of young people, you say in your paper, and I can see why, that:
- "Young women don't see the relevance of politics in their lives. They see politics as full of conflict."*
280. That goes back to the adversarial issue. It continues:
- "Young women don't know how to get into politics, Young women feel disengaged from politics".*
281. Again, I want your view. I spend quite a bit of time doing visits to schools — sixth form or upper sixth form — and even in higher education with 18- to 22-year-olds doing media studies, and different groups like that. I find that, in
- that age group of between 17 and 21, the more active people in the room are female. They are much more active than the young men. Is that your experience, and, if it is, then what is it that is vibrant and active about a 17- or 21-year-old group that seems to dissipate? Is it family responsibilities or what is it beyond the 21-years-old group? It appears to me that the hundreds of young females that I have seen are very active, vibrant and up-and-at-them for change, yet that does not translate into political action.
282. **Ms Carvill:** That is what happens in life generally; it is not just political life. We have a lot of young women and young men, but young women are politically active when they are at that age when they are leaving education and moving into higher or further education. What happens then is that life happens. Life happens to them when they move into work and life happens to them if they want to move into politics, and there are certain structural barriers that face females.
283. We had this discussion before we came in. For example, the largest amount of complaints made to the Equality Commission are still of maternity discrimination, even with all the legislation that exists. That is one part of it, but there are structural issues and barriers facing young women as they move into their 20s and beyond. A woman in politics who spoke to me a number of years ago talked about how she was a councillor hanging on by her fingernails as she was rearing her kids at that time. This was at a time when the conflict was on here as well, but that is what you do; you hang on by your fingernails, and then the kids grow up and you can re-immerser yourself in that life. I think that what you are talking about crosses all life in terms of how women move forward.
284. **Ms A Campbell:** As a rider to that, in Northern Ireland we are now faced with the move to the super-councils and so on. That is timely, and we needed to do it. However, that will increase the gender gap, and no positive action has been

- taken to ensure that those councils will be gender balanced. Undoubtedly, they will be training grounds for the Assembly, and that is the normal way that it should be. It is as if people are just sleepwalking into maintaining the gender gap through who is here in the Assembly and what their gender is.
285. **Mr Rogers:** That is the point that I was going to come on to. In many of our community groups and whatever, the women play the most active part. There seems to be a block in getting women into local government, never mind anything else. What more can we do to build capacity, not alone in our political parties but within communities, to allow women to make that step from community activities to local government activities?
286. **Ms A Campbell:** There is a range of capacity development issues. They do not all operate at the same time, but they are things like mentoring sessions particularly for women who are thinking of doing it. Basically, it is encouragement and support. There can be a lot of information that is held in a small group, say, a party. Again, you may not even realise that it is only you or six other people who know all this — people who have had the time to be in your company a lot — that you are sharing that information with. It is about making sure that the women who you are asking to come forward will feel that they will be supported in the role. There are funding issues. There are issues about when you choose to call those meetings so that they do not clash with the main points of childcare and those matters. As Lynn said, staying with it is an issue. The fact that you do not say immediately when someone asks you does not mean that you will not be a good MLA. It could mean that you are a thoughtful person who is considering the matter and considering how you can balance it all. Do not give up on the first one or two asks. I am sure that there are others there.
287. **Ms McVicker:** In 2006, there was an initiative taken called Women in Local Councils: Making a Difference. It was not just getting women to come in as local councillors, but it looked at the overall gender balance in councils, including the number of women in middle management positions and as chief executives. You cannot push the issue of getting women into local government; you have to look at the structure that they are coming into. You have to warm the place up, and you have to deal with a number of issues to do with gender rather than just having the objective of getting more women as local councillors. That initiative was supported by all political parties, and it was actually quite successful.
288. **Mr Rogers:** Was something like that not done quite recently in the South of Ireland to get more women involved?
289. **Ms Ruane:** New legislation was brought in.
290. **Ms Carvill:** There was a group called Women for Election that delivered training, and a lot of the new women who have moved in down there went through that process. There is training, and it is almost like a support network. It was highly successful.
291. **Ms A Campbell:** Looking at the balance in the Assembly at the moment, unless a critical mass of the male MLAs sign up to really push this forward, it is not going to happen. It cannot. There are not enough women to leave it to just the women here. You need to get men in all of the parties who are going to make this a priority issue.
292. **Mr Beggs:** At the tail end there you mentioned a highly successful training initiative — I think it was down South. Training is very important, but it should happen at all levels. We should encourage women to become active in their local community association or whatever informal community bodies there are. That makes them more likely to have the confidence to step forward as a councillor and be successful. Again, it is about having a network behind you. Very few people come out of the blue and suddenly become an MLA or MP. Usually there is either a community background or a council background.

- My question is about training at each of those levels, through community involvement and the upskilling of women councillors. What currently exists in Northern Ireland? Mention was made of DemocraShe, but what currently exists and what would you like to see exist? Can you tell me something more about the successful model that you mentioned in the Republic of Ireland?
293. **Ms Carvill:** The Women for Election programme started a number of years ago — I am trying to remember when; maybe four years ago — and was funded through a charitable trust. Essentially, it travelled around the South of Ireland, running workshops and inspiring potential politicians. Political parties put their women forward. Also in the mix, in a parallel process, was that quotas were coming in. Therefore, there was an onus on political parties to ensure that 30% of candidates were women. That was another push, and then this was another process in terms of training them. It happened at weekends, and current female councillors and TDs participated. They started mentoring aspiring politicians within that process. It became quite holistic, and it was very successful. I know that the women who run that programme — it is now more of a social economy private enterprise — have been in the Assembly on a number of occasions when these things have been discussed. You certainly might want to talk to them about how it worked, because it has been very successful.
294. I am sure that it has been mentioned, but just in case it has not, I cannot emphasise enough the importance of networks and support — Women for Election and those kinds of supports, and DemocraShe and those things that happened. It is about women knowing that they are supported, even across parties, by women who are in the same position as themselves. The men's networks exist already. Women's networks do not, at the moment. That is very important.
295. **Mr Beggs:** Can you tell us more about what is currently in place, if anything? Where do you see the gaps?
296. **Ms Carvill:** I do not know that there are any live projects. I do not think so. There are bits and bobs that happen periodically. The Women into Public Life project happened in the north-west and with Scotland. However, I am not aware of anything since then that is particular to training women in politics. The most recent project would have been the work happening with Politics Plus. Resources have continually been an issue, ever since the 1990s.
297. **Ms A Campbell:** The skills and so on are there. It is just a case of commissioning the work.
298. **Mr Beggs:** Sometimes there are skills but there still needs to be that confidence built in to an individual. I know some people who I would consider to be excellent potential councillors, but you need to encourage and encourage. Sometimes, that little bit of extra training can give them the confidence to step up. We as a Committee should try to do some further research through the Assembly Library to try to find out what is in place at present, so that we have a clear picture. It is a very important area.
299. **Ms A Campbell:** What I meant was that the skills are there, in organisations such as DemocraShe. You could absolutely put together good programmes. We have them there. It is just a case of calling for them to help do exactly what you are saying; to build the skills in potential candidates.
300. **Ms P Bradley:** In the 1990s, when I first was a member of the DUP, we did a DemocraShe course, which was run by Bronagh Hinds. That was where I met Pam Cameron for the first time. It was for DUP female members, and it was one of the most worthwhile courses to do with politics that I have ever done. It really made us think that yes, we can do this and be part of this, albeit it took me six or seven years before I put my name on a ballot paper. However, it was extremely worthwhile.
301. I know that there is a big job of work to do in the community to get people who are not in political parties involved. That

- is something that we as political parties have to take on. However, there is a big job to do with females who are already involved. Gregory and I were talking about this earlier. In our party, we have a large female membership, yet we are not getting even them to come through. It is something that we need to look at. Political parties need to look at the likes of DemocraShe for their female membership, so that they can learn the system. I found it so interesting and it really encouraged me to think that this was something that I could possibly do.
302. Megan brought forward a debate in the Chamber not too long ago. A motion was passed that we would bring in some sort of education or something. We need to follow up on that to find out where it has gone. A motion was passed that we would look at women's participation and training for women across the board. We need to pull that out again and look at where we are. Definitely, that type of training is so beneficial. I remember that, even years later, you could still phone Bronagh and say "Can you help me with this?". Networks were formed. I think that women are getting better with networks. We see each other quite frequently at different events. Every time you see each other and speak to each other, it is a wee bit more encouraging. We are a wee bit further forward. We have not taken big strides — I know that — but it is moving forward. For women like me and other female politicians, your organisation and others like it are our network. You are the people we can rely on to get a message out to the rest of the community. We should not lose heart. We are moving in the right direction. Sometimes we beat ourselves up a wee bit about how bad it all is. It is not; it will improve. I believe that.
303. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thanks very much, ladies. This has been one of the longest evidence sessions that I can remember. That shows the level of interest. There is a lot of work to be done, but, as Paula said, she is optimistic about the future, as are most of us. There has to be change. Hopefully
- there will be. Thanks very much for coming along.
304. **Ms McVicker:** Thank you very much for giving us the opportunity to come here and represent our views. We urge the Committee, at the conclusion of the review, to take bold, decisive action to bring that critical mass of women into the Assembly. As women, we hope that that will happen.
305. **The Deputy Chairperson:** You know that we can only make recommendations. We do not really have the power to make changes. *[Laughter.]* Thanks very much.

7 October 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Ms Paula Bradley
 Mr Gregory Campbell
 Mr Paul Givan
 Mr Trevor Lunn
 Mr Raymond McCartney
 Mr Seán Rogers
 Ms Caitríona Ruane

Witnesses:

Ms Jane Morrice

306. **The Deputy Chairperson:** I give you a very warm welcome, Jane. I suppose it should be “welcome back”. You have been here before in another lifetime as a Member of the Assembly. I invite you to give your presentation.

307. **Ms Jane Morrice:** Thank you very much, Chair. I am delighted to be here, and — you are absolutely right — to be back. This room had a big round table in it at the time, if I remember, which I was expecting to see, and there are all new faces since my day. Not much has changed, really. I am delighted to be here to talk about women in politics. I do not want to dwell on other issues in the political sphere, but I will start by saying that it is increasingly accepted that gender balance and peaceful politics are inextricably linked. That will be my starting point. It is perhaps something that we can debate in the Q&A session afterwards.

308. I am delighted that you have invited me and that you are looking into this issue so seriously. I know that you have done a lot of evidence gathering and you have been to Iceland and looked at Scandinavian countries and Rwanda and gathered evidence from experts and academics. I appreciate that you have come to me. I am not an academic and not an expert, but I suppose that I describe myself as an activist who cannot give up the fight. I

also appreciate that I am not here in any specific role, so I am wearing no particular hat, but I can relate to my experience in a number of different fields, particularly as a representative of the Women's Coalition in the first Assembly and Deputy Speaker of the Assembly from 1998 to 2003.

309. I could classify the barriers and challenges to women's participation in politics into two categories, which are the soft and the hard — the female and the male, if you like — the psychological and sociological and the physical and concrete barriers. I want to give you examples from my experience first of all. From that I think that the second category, which is the physical barriers, are easier to tackle than the psychological.

310. On the psychological barriers, I could dwell at length on the issues that we and all Assembly Members back then faced in those early days. The worst were the incessant attempts to demean, humiliate and treat with disdain. Lots of people remember it. Someone just mentioned to me on the way in how we were treated as female Assembly Members. However, interestingly enough, we were often told that it was not discrimination at all — that all politicians treated each other that way, so it was not discrimination. Daily, I was reminded, “This is politics, my dear”. I have to say that I did not like it. Interestingly, I have heard informed sources say that it has changed, but it could be that attitudes seem to have changed on the surface and that there is different treatment, but I wonder if attitudes have actually changed in the “body of the beast”.

311. I want to put as my first challenge in this category the culture that creates a cold house for women, as you have heard before. It is not just in politics, but in any place. I do not like to generalise,

- but I have to: it is in any place that men got to first. That is big business, boardrooms, Parliament and even the golf course. The mentality that a woman's place is in the home still exists among men and women.
312. I looked up the Google dictionary definition of the word "woman", and I could not believe what I saw. One of the indents was:
- "A female paid to clean someone's house and carry out ... domestic duties".*
313. It also said that it can be a way of addressing a woman, and it used as an example, "don't be daft, woman". That is Google. That is modern-day stuff, and it is a stereotyping which sets very, very dangerous precedents. That is the culture, then the stereotyping.
314. The lack of confidence among women is also hugely important, particularly among women of the older variety, of which I count myself one, although I am not short on confidence. A lot of women do not believe their own self-worth. They suffer from a lack of self-esteem and self-respect, and that is often not discouraged by partners, fathers, brothers, sisters or friends. Women are not encouraged to challenge themselves, to take risks, to reach beyond their capabilities or to be ambitious. An ambitious woman is a pushy individual, where that is not the case for a man.
315. I am generalising again, but I believe that the two main problems here are that we live in a society where women are still not taken seriously and where too many women still do not take themselves seriously. It is changing, but not fast enough. We need to change both the male and the female mindset. As I said, I am always generalising.
316. The second category — the physical, concrete problems — are simpler to explain and, as I said, easier to overcome. They include family-friendly working conditions; job share; flexible working hours; improved accessible childcare; accommodation for caring responsibilities; looking after elderly relatives, as well as children; changing the mentality of the workplace; and work/life balance. You will have heard all of those many times in your evidence-gathering up to now. The solutions in that area are relatively simple, but they depend on one thing, which is, without question, political will and leadership from the top.
317. Let us look at politics. As far as I am concerned, things like voluntary quotas are a must, for starters. To say that voluntary quotas are a must but that they are voluntary is something we can discuss later. I think that they should be set by political parties at the selection stage and for the lists. Timelines and targets should be set by the Assembly itself, if that is possible. If they are not achieved, there should be sanctions and even the threat of mandatory quotas by a certain date, such as from one Assembly election to another, for example. I also believe that the Assembly can do more in the area of affirmative action. You know that the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 allows it to try to get a 50:50 balance for Committee Chairs, Speakers, positions on the Assembly Commission, business trusts, delegations and other bodies, for example — trying to encourage as close to 50:50 as possible. There should also be specific training for women Assembly Members, mentoring schemes for aspiring female politicians and capacity building. A take-your-daughter-to-work day was quite current back then, and people were eager to do that. I do not think that it happens any more, but maybe I am simply not aware of it. Awareness of all this is important. Publicity is hugely important to make sure that the outside world knows that the Assembly is going to do something on this. That would encourage more women to see that politics would be more accessible.
318. I have been reading over some of the suggestions that have been made to you about an Assembly gender action plan. That would be a very interesting one to come up with, with a package

- of measures that takes in all of the above and more — everything from the confidence building to the mentoring and the targets and timetables. I believe that that would be a very interesting thing to start. I know that you have a new Speaker — I was delighted to meet him this morning — who is coming into place, and it would be a very interesting new departure for the new Speaker to work on getting a closer gender balance in the Assembly.
319. Obviously, you have already looked at the wonderful examples of progressive legislation in other parts of the world. You have been to Iceland and I am just back from Finland where, interestingly enough, they have serious problems with getting women onto boards in the private sector. They have done so well in politics and the public sector, but they cannot get women onto boards in the private sector. Malta is a very interesting one to look at. I met the Minister of Social Affairs in Malta, and she was telling me that all childcare is free there for working parents of children from 0 to 3, and then there is after-school provision. That is a wonderful thing — obviously costly, but very interesting.
320. Another one is the example of the new European directive on quotas for women on boards, which is very controversial. At the moment, it has not gone through the Council of Ministers; it has gone through the Parliament and the committee stage. Under that, there must be a quota of 40% of non-executive directors of companies that have more than 250 workers by 2020. That is encouragement etc, but with the potential threat of making it mandatory if it has not been achieved by 2020. It has to go to the Council of Ministers. Who knows how easily it will get through that?
321. I will close down here, because you wanted 10 minutes, and I could talk at length about it, but I want to hear your questions.
322. The text could be made to be more imaginative here. The idea of job-sharing in politics is something that I have been interested in for a long time. I have been pushing this idea since the end of the 90s. A pilot project would be very interesting. What you are getting there is two for the price of one — two candidates on one ticket. It was attempted in Scotland in the second Scottish Parliament election, I think, and the Secretary of State for Scotland at the time said that if the candidates won he was not going to allow them to sit in the Scottish Parliament. We were all ready to fight it in Brussels if that was the case, but they did not win, so it did not happen. It was also tried in Denmark in the European elections but again, it did not work for other reasons.
323. So, why not in Northern Ireland? It would be a fascinating way to go. A Labour MP, John McDonnell, has put it forward as well, so it is out there and it is something that is interesting people more and more. It would certainly enable not just women to get more involved but people with disabilities or people who feel that they could not carry out what ends up, as you all know, to be a 12-hours-a-day-or-more job.
324. There are plenty of ideas, but I repeat that it has got to come from the top. Look at what has happened in Rwanda; I spoke to a Rwandan Member of Parliament, and she said that it was because the boss — the president — said that it was going to happen that it did happen. As I said, it may be something for the new Speaker, or it could be addressed at the level of parties who could and should at this stage be battling with each other to attract more women.
325. One senior politician asked me how to get more women into politics. I just said, “Tap them on the shoulder”. Men might not need that tap because many men see politics as their rightful place, but most women do not see politics as their rightful place, or what they see, they do not like. I am generalising again, but that is the differentiation that we have to make; the tap on the shoulder needs to be quite encouraging and forceful and have supportive measures with it that will help these women not only get into politics, but stay in politics.

326. Thank you very much indeed.
327. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thanks very much, Jane. Trevor.
328. **Mr Lunn:** Sorry, I did not think that I would be first. I will have to marshal my thoughts now.
329. Thanks very much for that, Jane. At the very start you said that you thought that gender balance leads to peaceful politics. In Iceland, where we have just returned from, we asked the committee chair who we met — I can never pronounce her name, but she was very forceful and excellent — if their gender balance led to non-confrontational politics. However, she was absolutely adamant that it did not. The impression I got was that their politics was every bit as confrontational as ours, just on different issues, but that the women held their own. We know the record of very good representation there.
330. Secondly, you mentioned your own experience. I think that the words you used were “humiliating discrimination”. Was that because you were women, or because you were the Women’s Coalition and some kind of a challenge to the established order? I cannot help but think that, in recent times, we have tended to treat another new party in much the same way. That was not a women’s party — I am thinking of NI21. What do you think? Was it because you were regarded by the establishment as an uppity group of women or was it because you were actually women? In other words, were the women who were already here and not members of the Women’s Coalition treated in the same way?
331. **Ms Morrice:** Thank you very much, Trevor. I will answer your last point first. I think that you are right in that the response to the Women’s Coalition was a combination of things. By the way, when I said that my experience was of humiliation and demeaning behaviour, the point about discrimination was that people were saying to me that I was not being discriminated against because that was how they treated each other, men and women. Back then, it was all about everyone putting down each other, so they argued that it was not intended specifically for us. That is a different point.
332. Was it because we were women or was it because we were the Women’s Coalition? Both, obviously. We were a challenge to the norm back then, and people found it quite difficult to work out where we had come from and where we were going. It was a 10-year experiment. It was a project that started in 1996 and ended in 2006 and went some way to being a cog in the wheel that got the peace process moving, but only a small cog. There were an awful lot of other people much more heavily involved in that than we were.
333. **Mr Lunn:** Did you get a reaction from the women in other parties, rather than the men?
334. **Ms Morrice:** We got a reaction from both. It was not always an easy experience. I was the diplomat in the party, as you can tell. I believe that we held our own and helped move things forward, in spite of the fact that many people believed the contrary. You made a point about gender balance, peace politics and the Iceland experience. That is interesting, because it is absolutely the case that women are as confrontational as men when it comes to big issues that they want to defend. However, there is also a different way to do politics, and much more consensus building is needed in this House. I hate to generalise, but consensus building and trying to see the other side rather than confrontation politics is much more a woman’s way. In Iceland, there is still confrontational politics, but they have plenty of women representatives. I assume that the representation there is 50:50 or close to it.
335. **Mr Lunn:** It is not far off it.
336. **Ms Morrice:** Women bring value added to the negotiating table through their ability to encourage consensus building.
337. **Mr Lunn:** Have you met Caitríona?
[Laughter.]

338. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Are you finished, Trevor?
339. **Mr Lunn:** Yes, thank you.
340. **Ms Ruane:** I could comment on consensus building, but I am not going to, because I want to talk about the measures we can take. My starting point is that this is not a comfortable place for women. It is not about whether you are able for it — obviously, women are well able for the job in the Assembly — but about the way in which women are treated daily. I am well able to confront and take on the worst elements of misogyny and have done so, but I do not want to do that. I do not want to have to do that in the workplace. I should not have to do it, and nor should anyone else. If it happens in the workplace, it needs to be regulated, and, unfortunately, that does not happen here.
341. We have a problem, and it is recognised across all parties — I welcome that — that we do not have enough women and need to take measures to get more women. I like things such as quotas; I hear what you are saying about voluntary quotas, but I have listened to people tell us about the Icelandic experience, who said that, as long as it is voluntary, nothing really changes. Let us try it voluntarily, but eventually we will have to legislate or regulate. I would like us to have quotas immediately, but I am willing to have discussions here. Maybe the starting point is voluntary quotas, and we could then move on to mandatory quotas.
342. In Wales and Iceland, we also heard that, although we have a gap in representation by women at the moment, any measures that are brought in are done so by gender. If a board does not have enough men on it, you look at how to get enough men. In Iceland, you cannot go below 40% of either gender. The Welsh Assembly's presiding officer made that interesting point.
343. Funnily enough, I agree with you on the gender action plan. I sit on the Assembly Commission, and it is carrying out a gender action plan, which we are looking at. I also take your point about the new Speaker. Indeed, before Willie Hay left, he wrote to this Committee to say that, following our visit to Wales, he wants to see how we can do more for women in politics.
344. In Iceland, the idea of a job share came up, and everyone's eyes lit up; we really should look at that. Obviously, it is a difficult new concept for the electorate, but it would certainly be interesting to look at.
345. I will throw out a few things that you may want to comment on. I love free childcare for working parents; that is fantastic. It needs to cover before school, at school and after school because that is where you can really start to see a difference. Every woman and man whom we met in Iceland extolled the virtues of the three-month parental leave and said that it made a significant difference. Women academics, feminists — everyone — said that it made a difference, because it is flexible and can be taken at different periods. It can be taken just after a child is born, at the transition to work, at the transition to preschool or whatever. They were some of the comments.
346. As you probably know, legislation has been brought in in the South on the number of candidates for local government elections. It is probably too early to say whether it is working, but you will know from your experience of being in a party that there is nothing like finances to make a political party move on issues. Are you aware of that in the South or, indeed, anywhere? If you are, what is your view on it?
347. **Ms Morrice:** I will take those questions in reverse order. On the subject of the South and local government elections, I should have mentioned that I am the chair of the equality and diversity group of the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland. It has an initiative on women in local councils, which I think you will have heard about it. It started in 2006 and has done a fantastic job. I came on board a bit later, so I cannot claim credit for it. It is certainly getting women into chief

- executive positions in the councils, as well as more women into politics. It has not worked as well in politics as it has in chief executive positions, but it is a very promising template for a gender action plan. Have a look at what they are doing in local councils; it is very good.
348. You also mentioned the job share idea. I suggest that you get your research unit to look at what is being done and how it could be rolled out, because it would be a very exciting new development. It could start to sell politics to a bigger crowd. I cannot remember the term that was used when it was suggested at Westminster, but I think that it was “bonkers”. Think about a job share being bonkers. Back in the day, a couple of political people were holding down two if not three jobs. Was that stretching people? This is doing the absolute opposite and sharing it, so I think that it is very valuable.
349. Slamming down hard on mandatory quotas will not be passed; you will not get people to support that. Voluntary quotas, however, are a very good and healthy way to get competition between parties, as in, “We’ve got more than you”. Voluntary quotas could work with financial incentives and a carrot and stick attitude, with the stick being mandatory quotas. There could be a threat or a reminder that, if people do not get to voluntary quotas, something more could be done.
350. I hope that that has answered all your points.
351. **Ms Ruane:** What about the legislation in the South?
352. **Ms Morrice:** Yes, is that —
353. **Ms Ruane:** Parties must have a certain percentage of women candidates for council elections, or the party loses some government funding.
354. **Ms Morrice:** That is the list system — the quota system — and it is legislated for. I think that it is fantastic. Let us see how it works and how and who would legislate for it here. Would it be you?
355. **Ms Ruane:** Have you any comment on parental leave? I think that Iceland has very high maternity leave. Was it three months for paternity leave?
356. **The Assistant Committee Clerk:** It is nine months altogether.
357. **Ms Ruane:** Sorry; my mistake. Three, three and —
358. **Ms Morrice:** I was about to say that I understood that that was there already, but it is men getting —
359. **The Assistant Committee Clerk:** It is three months for women, three months for men, three —
360. **Ms Ruane:** One or other partner can then take another three months.
361. **Ms Morrice:** I totally agree. Any sort of innovative legislation that allows much more flexibility on which parent has the care and responsibility is valuable. Someone told me that the value of this is that it refers to gender rather than just to women. As you said, it has to be a minimum of 40%, whether it is male or female. That is valuable for parental leave.
362. **Mr Rogers:** Thanks, Jane. You are very welcome.
363. You talked about culture and stereotyping, and until we have a system of parental leave whereby a father also has three months’ leave, we will never build that into the culture. That is not only good for the family but good for the child and its development. My real point is that we should facilitate women in politics. I think that they have family-friendly sittings in Sweden. That does not seem to work out in Iceland because politicians leave home on a Monday and do not see their families again until maybe Saturday. Do you have any thoughts on family-friendly sittings?
364. **Ms Morrice:** Absolutely. I sat on the Committee on Procedures in the first Assembly, and we introduced family-friendly working hours then. I have not looked to see whether those have changed, but certainly the agreement was that you stopped at 6.00 pm. I think that it has changed so that sometimes

- the Assembly is allowed to sit longer if required, but the norm is that you stop at 6.00 pm. I understand that Scotland copied us, but maybe that is a mythology. Is it not the case that you have family-friendly working hours?
365. **Mr Rogers:** We do to some extent, but if you are travelling for two hours to get here, it is not so family-friendly.
366. **Ms Morrice:** I was very much involved in the proposal for timed sittings in the first Assembly, so you can blame me. At the time, people wanted a sitting to go on beyond 10.00 pm, 11.00 pm or 12.00 midnight, so a 6.00 pm cut-off was as far as we could go. That meant that a two-hour journey home was not as bad as it could have been. I think that a 4.00 pm cut-off or a 10.00 am start might be a bit difficult for you. I do not know what time your sittings are now.
367. **Mr Rogers:** In Sweden, to facilitate women, they talk about family-friendly sittings. Have they gone any further than that?
368. **Ms Morrice:** I do not know the times of the sittings in Sweden in particular. It would be hard to reduce further the 10.30 am to 6.00 pm period, which, as you said, accommodates men and women. In those early days, it was interesting that our male colleagues were just as keen as the women to get the Assembly sitting hours changed because of the two-hour journey home. I am just thinking on my feet, but you could try to have sittings over three days and reduce the times.
369. **The Deputy Chairperson:** The Committee Clerk has informed me that the Scottish Parliament looked at the idea of three morning plenary sittings, but that was rejected.
370. **The Committee Clerk:** The Committee on Procedures recently looked at the issue here. I cannot remember the details, but moving into the Scottish model of three mornings a week with a less heavy workload in the afternoons was not supported by the Committee on Procedures' deliberations.
371. **Ms P Bradley:** I agree. I sit on the Committee on Procedures, and that topic has come up. We looked at the demographics of Northern Ireland, travel distances and so on, which is one reason why we did not accept it.
372. Thank you, Jane. I remember you from when I was a young woman in my 20s watching the Women's Coalition, which is when I became more politically aware of my surroundings. I remember very well seeing how that all worked. You mentioned the media, PR and trying to make this a job that women feel that they can and should do. We have discussed that in Committee and in other forums, and I speak to an awful lot of women's groups. What women get PR-wise is disgraceful, such as the slants that are put on any successful female, not just female politicians. I follow a Twitter account, which tweeted about an article in 'The Guardian' yesterday that stated that successful women are aggressive. That is very much what people tend to think, even though it is totally wrong. We can hold our own — we know that we can and are more than happy to do so — but that does not mean that we are aggressive. PR and the media have a long way to go to make politics more open for females and make this the type of job that a female should do.
373. I definitely agree that we need the Assembly and the media to come on board and look at us for what we are talking about, not what we are wearing that day or how our hair is sitting. It does not have to follow that a female should be treated like that. Quite frankly, most of the men in the Building would not be treated in the way that some of the media treat the women.
374. I like the idea of an Assembly gender action plan and would be quite interested in teasing that out a bit further, because there is merit in it. I was certainly one of those women who received a tap on the shoulder. I did not see politics as my career, and it was not until I received the tap on the shoulder that I said, "Actually, you are right; I should do that".

375. In Iceland, we found out about the length of time that women stay in politics. The Parliament of Iceland found that men stay in politics for ever whereas women do not tend to do that. They come in, stay for one or two terms and leave politics. Do we need to look at something there? We want to get women involved and have more women in politics, but we want to keep them. Do you have any ideas on that?
376. **Ms Morrice:** I will take your points in reverse order. Women staying in politics is a very interesting issue, and I do not know whether it should necessarily be encouraged or discouraged. If that is the way women work it — doing one or two terms — maybe it is healthy to move on and let other people in. Maybe their male counterparts should be encouraged to do that to make room for new people. I am not suggesting that we put it in legislation that people can stay only for certain periods of time, but change is no bad thing. As a response off the top of my head, I would not go in the direction of trying to get a woman to stay in politics for life.
377. **Ms P Bradley:** Do you think that females do not see politics as a life career? I have had a few careers, but my mother had one career for 40 years. She would not have changed her career because that was the job that she loved. In any job I have done, I have been there because I enjoyed my job and did not want to leave it. Is that a reason?
378. **Ms Morrice:** You have hit the nail on the head: it is not as enjoyable for women as it is for men. As Caitríona Ruane said, it is not a nice experience. An awful lot of people ask me, “Did you enjoy your five years in the Assembly?”, and I tell them that “enjoy” is definitely not the word that I would use. It was challenging, rewarding and historic — all that good stuff — but it was not enjoyable.
379. **Ms P Bradley:** Do men say the same thing but then just continue? I expect more out of life. I expect to be content and happy and to look forward to going to my job every day.
380. **Ms Morrice:** That comes back to the point that politics should be made a warmer house for women, not necessarily so that they can enjoy it but so that they can thrive and be encouraged to stay and not have a sour taste in their mouth every time they go home after coming across something that did not work for them. I am not being specific, but the overall package is not something that women can thrive in or relish. That is probably one of the main reasons why women do not stay that long. There should be new blood always, but there should also be a much more attractive environment for women to be in.
381. Let me address the point about the media, which is a very interesting one. If there is a gender action plan in the Assembly, it should be run in parallel with getting the media involved. I recently started an initiative with a few people called Women Seen and Heard. We have not totally got it off the ground yet, but it is trying to get more women into the media. Often, if issues come up about women or Europe, the phone call is made to me and I am there. There are so many more female experts out there whose faces should be seen on the TV, whether it is in health, policing or any other area. The media need to be much more aware of calling women.
382. Female Assembly Members in the media is another interesting issue. We do not see as many female Assembly Members on the TV as we should. I do not know whether that is down to a party decision when it puts names forward or whether it is down to the women finding it difficult to offer themselves because of a fear that they will not toe the party line. I would be interested to know what parties do when it comes to putting women onto the TV as spokespeople.
383. Women fitting the male model is the other issue you mentioned. That is something that happens that has to be avoided. I always argue that women should not be afraid to wear pink. Look around and you will see the dark suits and the women copying their male counterparts. I think that women can get

- into politics and be themselves. They do not have to do the breakfast meetings if they have a child to take to school: they can say, “Sorry, can’t do that breakfast meeting.” In my day, I used to say, “I have a pressing prior engagement”, and that engagement was with my son at the school gates or something like that. We have to hide that because it is frowned upon if you do childcare stuff, and that has to change too.
384. **Mr McCartney:** Thank you very much for your presentation. You said, with some agreement, that politics can be a cold place for women. In that case, we have to make it warmer. In essence, you are appealing to the people who have made it cold to make it warmer, and those people perhaps do not accept that it is cold.
385. It is about how you make the impact. Caitríona talked about mandatory quotas in parties, but even that in itself is not a guarantee, because in PR elections areas can be carved in a particular way that means that you have a big quota but do not deliver more of a particular group — women, in this instance — into the mainstream. If there was a single thing that, you believe, the Assembly should do to make this place warmer, what would it be? Sometimes, there can be five or six different things, but they all talk over one another and you end up in the same place repeating the need to change what needs changes. So, what is the one big thing that you would change?
386. **Ms Morrice:** Public pronouncements. That goes back to political will. If people at the top — whether it is the Speaker, party leaders or others — start talking about bringing more women on board and put out press statements and go on air to say that, that sends the message to the grass roots that this is turning into a warm house. I am surprised that that is my answer. I believe that you could try all your tweaking and your legislation — I believe that that has to come as well in a gender action plan — all of which would be in a package of change, but if public pronouncements are heard — I believe that this happened with the women in local councils — so that people think, “Oh, they care; they are going to do something about it” and recognise that if they apply for a job they might actually get it, that might change things. It is about people leading and publicly pronouncing it. There you are.
387. **Mr McCartney:** That is an excellent idea. Even when it comes to Committee Chairs, it becomes difficult to legislate that that should be whatever, because parties then make the decisions about who goes into Chairs. That is why I am saying that sometimes these things have to be nailed down and made practical so that we make meaningful change rather than just saying, “That would be a good idea.” Public pronouncement is perhaps the first step, but we need to do something concrete.
388. **Ms Morrice:** Obviously, making things known by public pronouncement has to be followed up by moves. That is what I said in my presentation; it involves Committee Chairs and the Assembly Commission. There is a serious problem, because the small number of women that there are cannot be everywhere, which is very difficult in the life of this Assembly. It will be hard to get women into these positions this time, but next time around is an opportunity that should not be missed.
389. **Mr Lunn:** I wanted to ask you about the media side of things. The problem we seem to have — we can only speak for ourselves — is not so much that we do not put forward women in proportion to the amount of representation that they have, but that the media will not let us. Depending on what the issue is, the media is very insistent that, in our case, it has to be Anna Lo or Naomi Long. There is a range of issues but they will just not talk to the rest of us, to the point where, if we cannot produce the one they want to speak to, they will not ask us to produce anyone. That happens, and that is the first thing.
390. The point that I really wanted to make is this: you talked earlier about the mentality that pervades society here, which is that a woman’s place is in the

- home. That is what we are trying to get over here. We can talk about plans and artificial means, quotas and gender action plans, family-friendly hours and all those things, but the reason why the Scandinavian experiences are constantly put up as being examples of good practice is the fact that their voting system is different. They operate a list system in such a way that they have to put man-woman, man-woman or else leave it woman-man, woman-man. I do not know whether it is mandatory or whether it is agreed in the parties, but it is interesting that the biggest party in Iceland does not operate that system and is quite proud of its female representation.
391. When we talk about voluntary quotas — Raymond touched on it — you can produce a quota with an appropriate percentage of women and still, if the people who run the parties are so inclined, they can manoeuvre the situation so that hardly any of them have a chance of winning a seat. I am not pointing at anybody, but that is a fact. This is the thing about male domination that we are trying to get over. Do you have any thoughts about that?
392. **Ms Morrice:** It is fascinating that you brought up the problem of the media looking only for the women to speak to them. I wonder whether it is the case with other parties. I am surprised and would be interested to know what other parties do if the media insist on a woman in particular. At a press conference or something like that, you may have noticed that some parties are very careful about making sure that there are women behind the person who is speaking or, in the other case, a man behind the person who is speaking. The optics are terribly important in this as well. I was going to talk about ‘Hearts and Minds’ but that programme is gone now. By the way, I have noticed that the media are still doing four or five men on a panel without a woman. I find it shocking that that is accepted nowadays. I think that the BBC now has a ruling on its game shows — those lads’ game shows — whereby they now have to have a woman on, so there is one woman out of the eight people. However, we must definitely, in some way, impress upon the media that four men on a panel is no longer acceptable in this world. The media should hear that loud and clear, and that is back to our public pronouncement.
393. Political parties may say that they cannot control who the media want, but I would be very interested in what would happen if parties said, “You are not getting us unless we give you a woman.” Let us see what they would say then. If parties cannot do it that way, the optics of women being on your panels, behind your speakers, in your press conferences and that sort of thing is a way round it.
394. I do not know the details of list systems and the zip procedure of men and women. It is very interesting that the main party in Iceland did not use that, but it has got there. However, it is a procedure that, once the ball starts rolling, becomes natural, and I think that that is the case in the Scandinavian countries. It is just the norm that women and men are equally represented. It is in their DNA. When I was in Finland, I thought that they ticked every box when it comes to everything, from equality to treatment of people. It is wonderful.
395. We have not even mentioned education. We must educate youngsters into moving out of the stereotypes. That is hugely important, and it is really done in the Scandinavian countries, which is valuable.
396. I do not know whether I have —
397. **Mr Lunn:** You have covered it.
398. **Ms P Bradley:** I just want to pick up on the point about Chairs and vice Chairs. Sometimes, in here, we beat ourselves up a little bit. We have two Committees that each have a female Chair and a female vice Chair: the Health Committee and the Environment Committee. So, there are good things happening. If we looked at all the positions — Chairs, vice Chairs, the Policing Board, the Commission — we would see that most

- of the women in the Chamber hold a position somewhere on one of those bodies. I think that we need to look at the positives as well, especially when you look at the Environment Committee and the Health Committee. Not that it should be seen as the exception: it should be the norm. However, there are good things as well, when you see that two of the Committees are led by women.
399. **Ms Morrice:** Back to the optics: this is interesting, because I wonder whether the public see that. It is just as important to let it be known and be seen outside, as it is for it to happen inside. That is just the additional thing. We must recognise the positive but shout about it louder.
400. **Ms P Bradley:** Maybe we, as women, are at fault for some of those things as well. We should be shouting louder.
401. **Ms Ruane:** I want to follow on, just briefly, from the points that Paula and Trevor made. What parties need to do is to put women in positions of authority and power. Some parties do that more than others. Most parties now realise that they need to be doing it. Still, looking right across the board, I do not think that we should pretend that things are better than they are, because they are not good. Yes, we have a couple of women Chairs and that is good, and we have some women Ministers and that is good. However, by and large, the power within political parties is still with males. That is what our problem is.
402. It is about who decides who goes on the media. The woman Chair of the Health Committee will be sent on to talk about health, but the other Chair of another Committee will be sent on to talk about politics or what is perceived as politics — the hard stuff. That is why you are seeing all-male panels.
403. My party has a pretty good record in relation to positions. We have three women Ministers and two or three women Chairs. I am the only woman Whip, and I am on the Assembly Commission. But it is still not good enough. We need to challenge ourselves. I challenge my party, and I know that other women have to challenge their parties, though I am not speaking for any other women. The power, the decision-making, the managerial positions — that is where the key decisions are made, and party leaders have such an important role and responsibility. Trevor said that the media are asking for the women, and they may be, but his party has two male Ministers, and they are in the media. I am not saying that as a criticism. I am just saying that I often see David Ford in the media, so it is not just female members of the Alliance Party who are in the media.
404. **Mr Lunn:** I am sorry to interrupt, but it is not that they always look for women. What I said was that there are issues that are perceived as women's issues. Let us take education: it could be about under-representation of males in primary-school teacher roles, so it is a woman/man sort of issue. They do not go for the education spokesperson; they go for a woman. That is not a good example, but on the sort of women's issues that I am talking about, the media has a history, certainly with us, of looking for specific people, and that may not be the spokesperson on that particular issue. The media do not care. When you point out that so-and-so does not speak for us on that, it does not matter because that is who they want. We get that a lot.
405. **Ms Morrice:** I was wondering about a women's caucus. We tried to have that in the original Assembly, and it did not work. For example, the United States brought a group of women Assembly Members to Washington, in the early days. Not all women Assembly Members went, but there was an attempt to get us to cooperate. It did not work. I wonder whether it could work now or whether it would be valuable. I did not mention it, but it would be very interesting to know.
406. **Ms P Bradley:** It is something that we have discussed. I chair the all-party group on UNSCR 1325, and we have looked at that to see how that could

- develop women in politics more. I do not know; as you said earlier, it is a different political climate now from what it was then. Our politics have matured — sometimes, you would not think so, but, generally, they have on the whole. I have spoken to the Assistant Assembly Clerk about looking at a women's caucus. I know that women's groups in the community are very interested in that as well. So, it could be something that we might have to —
407. **Ms Morrice:** It could be somewhere for women to go where they would be less intimidated by this sort of scene. A women's caucus could be part of the gender action plan; just one of the many ways of doing it.
408. **Mr Campbell:** I apologise for being late. I was held back because I was dealing with a female, gender-specific issue. Maybe it was a good thing that I was held back to deal with that.
409. You raised the issue of optics, Jane. I just wondered how important you think that this is. Prime Minister's Question Time is the occasion when the magnifying glass of the public is put on politics in the UK sense. In the spring of this year, there was one incident at Prime Minister's questions where the entire Conservative Front Bench was occupied by males, and the Labour leader drew attention to that. Every week since that, the Tories have ensured that there are at least two, three or four females on the Front Bench. I do not know whether you are aware of that, but, to some of us, it looked as though it was a Conservative embarrassment reaction to what was a very good point made by Miliband. If that is the case, what do you think of that as a tactic?
410. **Ms Morrice:** Well, that is the name-and-shame type of approach. To go back to the point that I made about public pronouncements, your public pronouncements can be the positive ones — "Look, we have six women Chairs of our Assembly Committees. Isn't that brilliant?" — or the name-and-shame approach, which is to say, "We do not have enough Committee Chairs who are women". There are two ways to approach it, and both are valid, because —
411. **Mr Campbell:** Sorry, just on the optics, which is what I was getting at, given that television news seems to cover Prime Minister's Question Time more than some of the debates — it is the same here — it is not so much about what is being said by others, because it is the Prime Minister and the leader of the Opposition duelling, but that the visual image on one day was that there was not a single female. The Labour Party maximised the embarrassment of the Tory Party, to the effect that, every week since, they have been sure that there have been a number of females. Do you think that was a good idea or counterproductive?
412. **Ms Morrice:** It is a very good idea. It is tactical, and you could argue that it is tokenism, but it is very good for people to see women in politics backing up the Prime Minister at Prime Minister's Question Time, being interested, listening to what is being said and being involved. I think that, for the optics, we should see a mixture of men and women in politics on screen at a time.
413. **The Deputy Chairperson:** Thanks very much, Jane. That was a very interesting hour, which passed very quickly. Thanks for coming. It was a very useful contribution.

23 October 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Roy Beggs
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Seán Rogers
Ms Caitríona Ruane

Witnesses:

Mr Bell	<i>junior Minister</i>
Ms J McCann	<i>junior Minister</i>
Mrs Cochrane	<i>MLA - East Belfast</i>
Mrs Overend	<i>MLA - Mid Ulster</i>
Ms Fearon	<i>MLA - Newry and Armagh</i>
Mrs McKevitt	<i>MLA - South Down</i>
Ms Evelyn Collins	<i>Equality Commission for Northern Ireland</i>
Ms Diana Stewart	<i>Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland</i>
Ms Patricia Carey	<i>Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister</i>
Dr Fidelma Ashe	<i>University of Ulster</i>

414. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** I welcome everyone to Parliament Buildings this morning. In opening this event, I wish to use a quotation that sums up the evidence that we have heard to date. It is a quotation that has been used often, but I feel that it is worth repeating:

"Having more women in politics is not just the right thing to do — it's the smart thing to do!"

415. In deciding to take forward this review, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee was in agreement that the lack of women in politics was a concern and that the situation needed to be reviewed. As far back as July 2013, the Committee proceeded to commission research, the aim of which was to explore the gender balance in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Committee sought to answer three

questions. First, what measures are and could be put in place to ensure balanced gender representation among Northern Ireland Assembly Members? Secondly, what measures are in place in other legislatures and Executives in the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland and beyond to ensure balanced gender representation among Members? Thirdly, what is the legal basis with regard to gender equality?

416. The research contributed to the decision by the Committee to undertake the review of women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly and was the baseline for further actions that the Committee has undertaken as part of the inquiry. Those actions are commissioning further focused research papers on key issues; visits to the National Assembly for Wales and the Althingi — the Icelandic Parliament — to explore the incentives and legislation that they have used as models of good practice; and taking oral and written evidence from academics and the women's sector on barriers and challenges. I inform you that all the information that the Committee has gathered to date on the inquiry can be found on the Assembly and Executive Review web pages and the Assembly website.

417. On behalf of my colleagues from the Committee, I start by taking the opportunity to thank you for giving up some of your time, your knowledge and your experience for the Committee to take away and assist in its recommendations on the report. I also advise that today's event may be televised as part of the Committee's blog. The BBC and Northern Visions (NvTv) may also be here to film parts of today's event, and the footage may be broadcast at a later date.

418. At this point, I call on Ministers Jonathan Bell and Jennifer McCann

- to make their opening remarks to the inquiry. Ministers, you are both very welcome.
419. **Ms J McCann (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** Thank you, Stephen. I begin by thanking the Committee for inviting us here to make some opening remarks. I see some familiar faces around the tables. I think that all of us as MLAs here know about the under-representation of women in politics and in public and civic life in general. Most of us who are here — men and women — very often do not have to go too far to think of a positive role model in our life who is a woman, whom, when we were growing up, we learned from and who passed on the experiences that she had. For me, one of the most formidable people when I was a child growing up and long into my teenage years, before, unfortunately, I lost her, was my grandmother. My grandmother was a very significant person in my life. I know that some here who are my age — perhaps not so much the younger ones — will agree that, years ago, your grandparents were like your extended family. I used to live with my granny and granda for half the week. My older sister and I went to school from Monday to Friday and went home to our parents, but, on a Friday, we went straight to my granny's house after school. We stayed there and left for school on a Monday morning. She was almost like a second mother to me, and I have to say that a lot of the values, and so on, that I acquired came through her.
420. To get back to the issue of female representation, or, indeed, lack of representation, I think that, for too long, women have been under-represented in political life. I am sure that all of us here agree that more women need to be involved in political decision-making. It can be very frustrating sometimes when we are sitting watching. We know that something is the right thing to do, but to get it transformed into actual action and see it happening can sometimes be very frustrating. There are a number of barriers that we need to do away with to overcome and to achieve more representation. From my experiences of working in the community sector, as an MLA and now as a junior Minister and dealing with equality issues, I know that they are very complex and deep-rooted in wider society. Obviously, the gender inequality that is in society in general needs also to be tackled for us to make sure that women are supported and encouraged to enter political life, and public life as well.
421. The Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister is seeking to address some of those barriers. I know that Patricia will later introduce one of the sessions and give you a rundown of what we are doing and an update on the new gender equality strategy that we are bringing forward. We need to ensure that women who choose to work are not prevented from doing so by barriers. By removing those barriers, we will also enable women to participate fully in society and make their voice heard. Very often, women's voices are not heard. As a woman, and with no offence to my male colleagues, I am a firm believer that sometimes it is only women who can push forward and drive forward policies and service delivery. It is other women who have to fight that battle for them in places such as this. Therefore, I am very much aware that women out in our communities have a better representation from the female MLAs here or, indeed, from other women who deliver policy or decision-making in any other field.
422. Today is a chance to move this debate on, and I am delighted to share his opportunity with other women who have managed, not without any difficulty, not without any sacrifice and sometimes through having to make compromises, to get involved in public life and civic society. There is still very much to be done locally and in comparison with other Administrations. As I said, I am sure that we are all in agreement that the political culture needs to change, and there are many different ways in which people see that going forward. One of the first debates that we had in

- the 2007 mandate was on the under-representation of women in politics and public life. I have my view on how we can change that. I believe in a quota system. I believe that we cannot afford to wait until we grow into a political institution in which female numbers will naturally be on the same level as those for men. It is about much more than that. I know that colleagues and MLAs from different parties will have a different view, and I can see now that we are having more discussion about it and that we are opening up the debate again.
423. I do believe that there are ways. We did not pass that first motion, but, recently — last year — we passed a motion in which we all agreed that we could support and encourage more women and put in place the mechanisms so that that could happen. I think that the all-party group helps that, and I know that some work is being done, probably under the radar, as women are used to working under the radar. Even looking back at our peace process and how that grew, I can remember women from women's organisations on the Shankill Road and the Falls Road working together even in the 1980s. Women have always had that culture of working together under the radar on women's issues and other issues that concerned them. I hope that that work will continue up here on trying to make progress and bring forward not just the representation but the service delivery and policy delivery that women in our communities need us to.
424. I believe that women who are empowered can achieve political, social and economic change that will lead to greater equality, more women in politics, and, in turn, a more equal and just society. Women now make up 52% of the population in the North. Women make up over half the population of society as a whole. Therefore, it is only right and proper that women's interests be represented in politics and all aspects of life. Political parties have a role to play in that. Political parties need to encourage and support more women candidates to come forward, not just at elections but in the work that they do daily. There is work to be done on every aspect.
425. When I look around the Chamber and see all these men talking on issues that primarily affect women, I sometimes feel, "My God, here they go again". There is an onus on political parties to ensure that there are more women here. There is an onus on women themselves to try to support and encourage other women and not to see them as a threat almost and pull the ladder up on them. It is important that we continue to encourage other women. There is also an onus on our male colleagues to make sure that there is a focus on women's issues, that there is gender equality throughout all political parties, and that the barriers that prevent women from coming forward into political and civil life are removed.
426. I am sorry that I have to leave halfway through this, but good luck to the Committee. I hope that this will move the debate on.
427. **Mr Bell (Junior Minister, Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** Thank you, Stephen, for the invitation to be with the Assembly and Executive Review Committee here this morning. There is an old Chinese proverb, which is:
- "Women hold up half the sky."*
428. From the figure that Jennifer has just given us, I think that they now hold up 52% of the sky. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) came into force on 3 September 1981 and has been ratified by 188 states. Over a decade ago, the UN Beijing Platform for Action expressed commitment to the empowerment of women based on this conviction:
- "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace."*

429. Those conventions are essential, but more important are the actions that follow as a result. Thus, the importance of the review of women in politics by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee cannot be overestimated. The Northern Ireland Assembly has 22 female members out of a total of 108, which is just over 20%. Those figures are stark. Such under-representation highlights the importance of taking steps to ensure that the inequality is addressed. Women, along with other under-represented groups, have already waited generations for equal access to power. Real change is needed, and the outcomes of this review will help in making that change. Amelia Earhart laid down the challenge to everyone when she said:

"The most effective way to do it is to do it."

430. In this room, we have a wide range of people with significant experience and expertise in the area. This is a great opportunity for those voices to be heard. Your voices and opinions are powerful and can help to make a real difference for women now and in the future.

431. Sometimes when I look around in meetings in the Assembly, it seems to me that there is almost a vacuum of women. As Adrienne Gusoff said, "Living in a vacuum sucks." I will try that joke again at the end. *[Laughter.]* Institutional, systemic and individual barriers limit women's influence in decision-making structures in most walks of life, including economic and political institutions, trade unions, the media and religious bodies. It is incumbent on all of us to help remove those barriers and play our part in redressing the imbalance. We need to challenge the stereotyping that still exists. We need to create an environment in which women are empowered, enabled and, above all, valued for the important contribution that they make to public life in Northern Ireland. As Ayn Rand said:

"The question isn't who is going to let me; it's who is going to stop me."

432. There is a great opportunity today to focus on the way ahead and to ensure that women equally share leadership and power. As Eleanor Roosevelt said:

"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent."

433. I know that the review has triggered great debate. It is important that that, in turn, triggers actions in the months ahead. I will finish by saying that, when I look at the Assembly and see the lack of the contribution and talent that women can bring, the thought that comes to my mind is something that I learned from Erma Bombeck, who said:

"When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, 'I used everything you gave me.'"

434. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** I thank the junior Ministers for taking time out of their busy schedules to come and speak to us this morning.

435. I have a few housekeeping announcements to make. Each of you will have a pack that includes information on the inquiry to date and the role of the Committee and its members. Today, you will hear four speakers. I take this opportunity to thank Evelyn Collins, Fidelma Ashe, Diana Stewart and Patricia Carey. Their collective expertise and experience will set the context for the discussions that will take place at each of your tables. Each table is chaired by a member of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee or a Member of the Northern Ireland Assembly. There will also be at the table a rapporteur, whose role is to capture the key issues and recommendations on behalf of the table. With so many organisations present today, our time is inevitably limited. We will have a maximum of approximately 20 minutes per presentation, and I ask you to focus on the key issues, please. Without further delay, I call on Evelyn Collins, chief executive of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, to give the first presentation.

436. **Ms Evelyn Collins (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland):** Thank you very much for the kind invitation to speak this morning. The Equality Commission welcomes greatly the Committee's inquiry on women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly that is being undertaken at present. We are, and have been, a very strong advocate of more equal representation of women in political life in Northern Ireland. We really trust that the inquiry generally will lead to concrete and practical actions being undertaken to encourage and support more women into political life in Northern Ireland, particularly as MLAs but also on local councils.

437. I was invited today to speak about what kind of initiatives, including positive actions, the Northern Ireland Assembly should consider. First, let me nail what positive action is. Simply put, positive action means taking lawful, proportionate measures to address under-representation or to tackle past disadvantage of a particular group, in this case, of course, women. We have heard from Jonathan about the under-representation of women in the Assembly.

438. Political parties themselves can engage in quite a wide range of lawful positive action for candidate selection, but it is not my job to talk to you about that this morning. It would be wrong of me, however, not to mention it, as we have banged on about it since 2002, when it was introduced. Political parties can take special steps to ensure that more women are being put forward for election. The Committee might wish to encourage parties to make use of those provisions. However, Fidelma Ashe from the University of Ulster will speak about that, among other things, next.

439. The Assembly can, as an institution, take positive action measures in view of the low representation of women. I have 10 concrete ideas for you, because I probably have only about three and a half minutes left now. They are in three broad areas. First, it is absolutely critical that the Assembly continue and redouble its efforts to improve

education, engagement and outreach, specifically targeting girls' schools and clubs and women's organisations, to raise awareness of the role of the Assembly and explicitly to encourage girls and women to consider politics as a career choice. My second idea for you to discuss is that the Assembly can take steps to support action, including through funding, designed to develop the skills and experience of women, including capacity-building measures and training that supports women who are considering a career in political life. I know that, last year, the Assembly debated and resolved that, when put in place, support and training programmes can be very effective, and called for the introduction of a training and support programme to encourage more female candidates to stand. That is something very concrete that the Assembly could do.

440. My second set of suggestions for you to discuss relate to structures. In line with structures that exist in other Parliaments, the Assembly could consider the merits of establishing a dedicated Committee to consider issues of particular relevance to and priority for women and review how women are impacted on by government policy generally. That could form a real connection with women in the community and seek to resolve some of the disconnect that exists, particularly among women. Secondly, you could consider creating a network of champions to promote women's contribution to political life, drawing from senior party representatives. Diana Stewart from the Local Government Staff Commission will talk later about the very successful women in council initiative, which focused on a network of champions. You could also encourage leadership and the articulation of a high level of visible commitment. For example, although it is delightful to see the two juniors here, what about the First Minister and the deputy First Minister regularly and routinely talking about the importance of women's contribution to political life? Indeed, all the other party leaders

could do that, including those present today — good to see you. They could highlight the importance of more equal representation of women in politics, not just as a women's issue but as a recognition that an Assembly that is more representative of the community is important when it comes to legitimacy.

441. The Assembly could also encourage political parties to ensure, as far as possible, that women are represented on all Committees. I know that that is difficult with a small number, but there are currently two Committees with no women representatives on it at all. You could take steps to ensure that all legislation passed by the Assembly does not discriminate on the grounds of sex but actively promotes gender equality. You could bring a gender lens to the legislation being brought forward and encourage the visibility of women MLAs in the media by political parties.

442. Finally, I want to mention a couple of things that relate to the working environment in the Assembly. You could look at its institutional culture and take measures to ensure that that institutional culture is welcoming to and supportive of women MLAs; for example, by ensuring zero tolerance of sexist bullying and derogatory behaviour and that effective policies and procedures are in place to deal with it if it occurs. Clearly, a code of conduct is in place that governs MLAs' behaviour and that of others. It needs to be absolutely clear that that covers sexist behaviour as well as other behaviour. Finally, a concrete example for you to think about is taking steps to help ensure that Members can balance work and family life; for example, by reviewing the support available for Members with primary caring responsibilities, whether for children or older relatives, and, for mothers returning after maternity leave, by addressing any barriers to their effective participation that exist.

443. I hope that I have achieved in five minutes what I was asked to do. There is a rich source of experience, energy and ideas in the room. I know that from seeing so many familiar faces. It is

great that the Committee has gathered together such a good crowd for the discussions this morning. I want to finish by saying that this is an absolutely critical issue for Northern Ireland. It is not just about the Equality Commission. It is not just the women in this room who believe that more fair representation of women in political life in Northern Ireland is important. A couple of years ago, two thirds of people surveyed in our equality awareness survey — men and women — agreed that it is vital to see an increase in the number of female MLAs. I am delighted to be here this morning and look forward to the rest of the discussions.

Round-table discussion ensued.

444. **Dr Fidelma Ashe (University of Ulster):** Good morning, everybody. I thank the Committee for inviting me to participate in this event today. This is the stage of the day when we start to look at what parties can do at a very concrete and practical level. That is one of the most important issues that we address.

445. There is a tremendous amount of expertise in this room, so I will keep my introductory comments quite short. I want to focus on a couple of issues because I think that it might be helpful to address them right at the beginning. I think that how parties frame this issue is very important. Sometimes what I call the "gender psyche frame" comes into play. That suggests that processes of socialisation undermine women's confidence. It erodes women's political ambition. The response sometimes is that parties call on women to put themselves forward. There may be issues around confidence, and those can be addressed, but if we stay within that framework, I believe that it limits the kind of options that we look at. I think that it narrows the field with regard to how we look at it. Perhaps one of the issues could be how the issue is framed. How is it framed to encompass all of the structural, situational and ideological barriers to women's representation?

446. That may open a range of options for parties to consider. Each party has to implement its own strategy, taking into account its own culture and constituencies. If it takes responsibility and believes that it can effect real change and bring more women into political life, then there are a range of options available to it.
447. One option, as we all know, is to have quotas. Quotas raise a whole series of issues. Often, the idea of merit becomes invoked in discussions around quotas. Perhaps, we need to consider what actually constitutes merit. What way is merit constructed? Is it constructed in a way that may actually not benefit women? Can parties actually lead forward and start to set minimum gender-balanced thresholds? Is that possible? Can they marshal support from their constituencies to do that?
448. How could that strategy and others be pushed forward? Is there potential for a women's caucus? What is the role of male elites in the party? Should male elites in the party put their shoulder to the wheel and push this forward? Does some work have to be done on how women in parties understand the opportunities that are available to them? Is there a need to do some research to understand women's views and create a database of what the actual obstacles to them are? Are there hidden prejudices that parties need to be aware of? How do you find that out? How do you establish what is going on in parties? What role could champions play? What role does the media play? Do women need to be profiled more in constituencies? Do they need to have a higher profile in the media? Do they need to have a higher profile in parties?
449. There does seem to be a submerged yet shared concern among a number of MLAs around this issue. I think that, moving forward, there are a couple of issue to really focus on. How do parties prioritise this issue of women's representation? What strategies do they put in place to promote women's representation? Who drives that

forward? What are the benchmarks? How is it monitored and evaluated?

450. These are the key issues. They are difficult issues. But, I will leave you by saying that other countries have faced a similar problem. Other political parties across the world have faced a similar problem. Those parties have been able to come up with a set of strategies that have been able to move us forward on this issue. Parties do need to discuss this issue, but they also need to get practical, concrete strategies in place that can be assessed and evaluated.
451. Thank you very much for listening to me. I wish you all the best with your discussions.

Round-table discussion ensued.

452. **Ms Patricia Carey (Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister):** It is a very good sign that it took so long for people to finish the conversations that they were having. Obviously, the previous presentations have engendered a huge amount of interest and support for the topic.
453. What is government doing to encourage more women into decision-making? It is very good to have the opportunity to come along. Thanks to the Committee for inviting OFMDFM to talk about what government is doing. The main attributes of government in this respect are providing leadership, working in partnership, and embracing equality, diversity and human rights. The Programme for Government 2011-15 says:
- "we will ensure that no section of the community is left behind; equality of opportunity, fairness, inclusion and the promotion of good relations will be watchwords for all our policies and programmes across Government".*
454. So, equality is a watchword.
455. The gender equality strategy was published in 2006. Although much of the work was done under direct rule, clearly, it was adopted by the incoming Assembly. I was going to say this even if Evelyn Collins had not mentioned the

- First Minister and deputy First Minister: it is signed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the junior Ministers. That is a clear commitment from the Northern Ireland Government that gender equality is an issue.
456. The strategy covers men, women, transpeople, girls and boys. It is not a strategy just for women. It recognises, therefore, that equality for women has to be taken forward in the context of equality for all. Different people have mentioned the role of men, the need to look at male elites and the role that men can play. Clearly, in terms of encouraging women in decision-making, the issues for women are going to be different from the issues for men.
457. We have a gender equality strategy. We have reviewed it. We think that it was a very good start; it signalled a very clear commitment to gender equality. Equally, however, we know that it was not as good as it could have been, and we have learnt from that. Therefore, we are developing a new gender equality strategy. Having carried out the review, we have devised three main themes for our new strategy, which are very much an evidence-based approach, very much an outcomes-based approach and very much subjected to scrutiny in whatever way that can take place, such as through consultation; receiving comments, critical and supportive; and ensuring that all aspects of what government is doing are looked at critically in a statistical and evaluated way that monitors what we are doing and ensures that government does not put out a strategy, thinks it is wonderful and then expects that to deal with all the issues. We are very conscious of the fact that consultation, particularly with people affected, is a key element of our approach.
458. Leadership is more than strategies. We recognise that there need to be role models and champions. Another speaker mentioned champions. Another speaker also mentioned driving change. It is really interesting that some of the themes coming through from independently prepared submissions today are focusing on the same themes, whether it is local government, the Equality Commission, the universities or central government and OFMDFM. We need to stringently review our policies and practices and insist on equality in every aspect of what we do.
459. We need to lead by example in the Civil Service at all levels and in the work we do around public appointments. At the beginning of the period of the current strategy, which was 2006, there were just over 30% of women in public appointments. Nearly 10 years later, that has not changed. We recognise that, although there have been significant improvements in other aspects of life, there are some problems that remain intractable. Clearly, women in politics is not a matter for a Department to decide, but the work that government does can influence how women are viewed in society in general, and it can lead to systemic change in the way that people operate.
460. We need to work in partnership. We have an excellent and really helpful gender advisory panel that we developed when we set up the strategy. We have taken its expert advice and guidance as we have moved along. We work across Departments. We have various structures set up across the 12 Departments. The advantages of a review like the current one are that it brings people together, even on a panel and in a room, in a way that we should be doing but do not do. Even today, this event can act as a catalyst for future change and help us to be outward-facing while remembering that we need to look at ourselves as well.
461. We also need to embrace equality, diversity and human rights. The Ministers talked about our obligations under the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing declaration. The Istanbul convention, which the UK is ratifying at the minute, is about sexual and domestic violence against women. We have a committee on the status of women. We also have to remember that women are not a single-faceted

- group. We have to remember that there are women with disabilities, lesbian women, bisexual women, women with different religious beliefs and political opinions, women from different racial groups, transwomen, single women, married women, divorced women, and women with dependants. The idea that, somehow, one thing will effect change for women generally is not going to work. We have to look at the individual and collective circumstances of women and their individual lives and adopt a multifaceted approach, because we are all multifaceted people. There are older women, younger women and people across the spectrum. There are women from different socio-economic backgrounds. It is interesting that in public appointments not only women but people from different socio-economic backgrounds are underrepresented. Some of the barriers stopping women fulfilling their true role in society are also stopping other people. Work that we do around equality and human rights to ensure equality for women will inevitably lead to equality across the board for disadvantaged, marginalised and forgotten-about groups.
462. Finally, OFMDFM's vision is of a society in which men and women, boys and girls and transpeople are equally respected and valued, and in which they share equality of opportunity, achieve equality of outcome and are able to fulfil their full potential. Thank you very much.
- Round-table discussion ensued.*
463. **Ms Diana Stewart (Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland):** Thank you. Good afternoon and, on behalf of the staff commission, I thank the Committee for inviting us to share our story, success and experience with you. The women in local councils initiative was launched almost 10 years ago; its aim was to identify, develop and promote initiatives to encourage the participation and advancement of women in local government, specifically at senior levels, in non-traditional areas and with elected representatives. The initiative also aimed to achieve steps towards gender equality throughout local government now — this was in 2005 — and in the new council arrangements. That was because we were, even then, looking at the reform of local government.
464. The staff commission demonstrated visible commitment through its chief executive, Dr Adrian Kerr, and chairman, Brian Hanna, by developing for the first time a proactive strategy using key stakeholders and partner organisations, which were brought together to look at the under-representation of women in local government. The commission identified key partner organisations such as trade unions, the Equality Commission, the Northern Ireland Government Association (NILGA) and the National Association of Councillors. It used experience of best practice in democracy and business in the community and invited OFMDFM to be members of the steering group.
465. It was recognised that this was going to be a major cultural shift for local government and that, although the steering group was representative of all the key partners involved in looking at gender equality, no system and no cultural change process would work without the 26 councils taking ownership. We further felt that the cultural change in local government would not be sustained without ownership by elected representatives and the five main political parties. Therefore, the steering group saw the political dimension as critical to the success of the initiative.
466. One of the initiative's unique features was the nomination, identification and creation of a gender champion network. These gender champions drove the change at local level. We had change champions in the 26 councils, NILGA and the five main political parties. They assisted in identifying and sharing experience of best practice and acted as the main points of contact. The commission also produced a declaration of principles that was endorsed by all district councils, committing them to the principles of equality and the promotion of a culture in which women felt able to

- participate fully in order to utilise their skills, knowledge and experience.
467. We also worked with the councils, political parties and NILGA to provide a framework to address any gender under-representation by drawing up action plans that included monitoring and reporting. We provided capacity building and development by way of mentoring, development centres and specific opportunities for the gender champions to develop their skills and experience, and we ring-fenced £25,000 per annum for three years for the initiative.
468. Since 2011, the commission has reassessed its work on women in local councils and work on disability and has amalgamated the two into a broader equality and diversity initiative. Those 26 gender champions now act as diversity champions across the local government sector. The networks are retained and the work is ongoing. The commission has seeded the ideas in the councils, which are now working in steering groups and individual organisations. For many, for the first time, elected member and officer groups have been working together, are being developed together and are sharing capacity building.
469. Has the initiative made a difference since its launch in 2005? We assessed it after five years. In 2005, we had no female chief executives, and 14 of the 26 councils had no women in their senior management teams. In 2010, there were four female chief executives — an increase to 12%. There was a 10% increase of second-tier officer posts, and 19 councils had a chief executive or director in place. To bring that up to date, appointments to the 11 new councils were made in the first part of this year, and four of the 11 appointments are female, which is 36% of the current local government chief executives. The first council, Antrim and Newtownabbey, has now appointed their directors, and it is an all-female team — the four directors and the chief executive are female. That bodes well and puts paid to the idea that maybe the reform was going to have an adverse impact on gender equality. However,
- through the development and the initiative, we feel that we have made a difference. Thank you.
- Round-table discussion ensued.*
470. **Mrs Karen McKevitt (Northern Ireland Assembly):** First of all, I thank all those who organised this wonderful event this morning and this afternoon. I have learned so much. I got to chair table 7, so I want first to congratulate all those around my own table. I have learned so much, and I hope to be able to take some of the positive contributions that you have made here back into a group where we can see productive outcomes of those ideas. It was absolutely brilliant.
471. It is my privilege to address you all today. I was elected as an MLA for the SDLP three years ago. Prior to that, I was a councillor in Newry and Mourne District Council, where I served as a representative for the Crotlieve area for six years. I am married to a lucky man called Patrick. I have five children, whose ages range from 11 to 21. It is hard being a wife, a mother and a politician. I entered politics when my youngest child was under two. On many occasions, to get my voice heard or, more important, my constituents' voice heard, I had to take my children into council meetings. Thankfully, most of the time they were easily amused with a toy or a crayon and a piece of paper. I would have drawn round my hand, and they would have coloured in my nails and different things, just so I was able to get the job done and to talk about the rates, the planning, the flooding or whatever the issue of the day was.
472. When I was there, there were four female councillors out of a group of 30. That was back in 2005. While, thankfully, the number of female representatives across the political institutions has increased since then, it is a long way off that 50%. There are positive steps that we can take to enable more women to get involved in political life and to make political life more family friendly. To start, we could look at amending parliamentary

procedures to facilitate women's participation, such as family-friendly sittings and childcare provision. A career in politics is far from being a nine-to-five job, and there is no real consistent work pattern, meaning that it can be very difficult to plan childcare. This has been a very busy week in the Assembly. We debated the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill and the Education Bill in the Chamber on Monday and Tuesday. Monday's debate ended at 2.00 am, and Tuesday's debate ran until after 10.00 pm. Those are not family-friendly work hours. They would certainly put women — indeed, even some men who are fond of an early night — off the idea of entering politics. Better planning, or perhaps adding an extra sitting day, could prevent such long hours in the Chamber. However, it is a lovely job and one that I like in particular. God gave me a voice and two ears to listen and, thank God, I am a good listener. As my family would say, I can definitely talk plenty.

473. We should look at the actions and strategies introduced in other countries to increase female participation. We can learn from those. Some very positive ideas have come from our table, and I certainly will bring them forward ASAP. We could rely on the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister to address all the equality issues. However, I am not convinced that gender equality is high on their priority list, but that is something that I intend to bring forward. We have to continue to push gender equality up the priority list.
474. Thank you all for coming here this afternoon. I have definitely learned something today, as I am sure the rest of our female MLAs have — and the male MLAs who attended. I will bring plenty of information forward. Thank you.
475. **Mrs Judith Cochrane (Northern Ireland Assembly):** Thank you, folks. I have really enjoyed the session today. There have been some great ideas.
476. I will tell you quickly a little about myself. I am married to Jonny, who has put up with me for 12 or 13 years now. I have a six-year-old and a 10-year-old and have

been involved in politics since 2005, pretty much since Emma, my eldest, was four months old or something like that. I got involved after Naomi Long came with a present for the baby when I was on maternity leave. She said, "Would you get involved in the party, please? We would like somebody to run". I thought, "Run? What, me? I don't run anywhere". She wanted me to get involved. She saw qualities in me that she thought would be worthwhile and helpful in politics overall. I started off in Castlereagh council. Like Karen said, I had days when I brought my children with me in the bucket seat and had them under the desk during council meetings in case they needed to be fed. I feel lucky that we were able to do that. Had I been working as a nurse or something, I would not have been able to take my child with me and stick it under some patient's bed or something. There are things in place, and I have found that I have been supported on issues.

477. The biggest challenge and problem I found was handling adverse comments. I genuinely think that women take things more personally than men do. I have been the person who cried in the Chamber. If you want to know more about that story, come and talk to me. However, over the past couple of years, I have built firm foundations with the bricks that people threw at me and grown as a person. Here in the Assembly, the Politics Plus initiative, which is not just for women, has provided capacity building for some of us. Some good initiatives are in place.
478. Media representation of women needs to be challenged a bit more. There is a saying in politics: if you want anything said, ask a man; if you want anything done, ask a woman. A lot of us women really just want to get on with the work and achieve something. My experience of a number of men is that they just want to get their face in front of the camera, even if they do not have anything particularly constructive to say. Part of that is the problem that we face as well, in that we need to push ourselves forward a bit more. There

- is also the issue of a woman's image often taking centre stage. However, I feel that there are some women who do not help us in that situation. Some women want to look nice all the time — who does not want to look nice? — but for them it is about image and getting their photograph taken. I am sorry, but that is not what being a politician is about. There are too many career politicians. They are the ones who are always thinking of the next election. We need people who are thinking about the next generation. Those are the people that we need here.
479. In all walks of life, not just politics, women seem to have to do more to prove themselves. I pay tribute to my colleague Trevor Lunn, who is on the Assembly and Executive Review Committee. I believe that he proposed this inquiry. It is good that there is a man out there championing our cause, and I am sure that there are plenty more of them. I hope that a lot of the positive things that have been said today will be taken forward and we will start to see a difference up here.
480. **Ms Megan Fearon (Northern Ireland Assembly):** First, I want to say how brilliant it is to see a room full of women — and men — discussing issues of importance to women and, more importantly, discussing equality. We know that women are under-represented completely in all walks of life. We have heard all the statistics today, so there is no need for me to go over them again. At the outset, it should be said that any issues that we discuss today are only compounded and magnified for lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, for women with disabilities and for women from a lower socio-economic background. When I was thinking about what I wanted to say today, particularly as a young woman, I was looking back at the reasons why girls do not get involved in politics or why women do not have the confidence to do that. At the outset, let me say that it is actually dangerous to let me up here to talk about women because I could be here all day, but I will try to keep it short. Going back to the beginning of a girl's life and considering a simple thing like when Santa comes at Christmastime, what does a girl get? A toy kitchen or a pram with a baby in it. What does her brother get? A science kit or a train set. From the very outset of life, you are conditioning young girls to be mothers and homemakers, and you are kind of saying to them that that is all that you should ever aspire to be.
481. Judith spoke about the media. Later on in life, women are force-fed these images of an ideal of beauty that is completely unattainable, and girls are told that the most important thing that you will ever do in your life is be beautiful, and that being strong and smart and accomplished is not enough. Sadly, girls actually believe that. I know so many girls who have so much potential who are more worried about the way that they look than the way that they are in school. A survey that was done recently showed that 25% of girls do not raise their hands in class because of unhappiness about their appearance, and I think that that is a really sad reflection on the society that we live in. Girls are told that their value as a human being is inextricably linked to their appearance.
482. You might ask me what the relevance of all of this is, but mental health statistics are soaring, particularly for young women. It is not talked about. Eating disorders are soaring, and anxiety and depression are going through the roof. That all links into confidence, so I think it is important that women are visible, but in the right way because, as Paula and others will know, we are often the subject of the kind of media attention that our male counterparts will never be. You have spreads of women's outfits in the newspapers. When Meghan O'Sullivan, an extremely accomplished woman, was over during the Haass/O'Sullivan talks, I saw more articles about her shoes than her PhD, and that shows you the way that the media treat women. I think that they have to take responsibility. It is important that women are able to see their role models so that young girls can look up and say,

- “That could be me. I want to make a difference. I want to get involved”.
483. Unfortunately, as I have said before, our Assembly is too male, pale and stale, and we need women in positions of leadership to be seen as a social norm, because the age-old image of leadership is an older white man. The fact that that is all that girls ever see cements that kind of image, so we need it to be seen as a social norm that women are leaders. I think that we need to make our politics seem more appealing. Earlier, I said at our table that I could stand here all day and talk about the sexist comments or the treatment that I have had since I started. I have been here for two years, and I am sure that it is the same for all of the female MLAs. It is ridiculously infuriating. I cannot put into words how annoying it is, and I think that it is probably a double-edged sword for me, being so young as well.
484. On what we can do to improve things, I think that political parties have a role to play. I do not want to stand here and be negative or criticise other parties, so I think that, instead, I will just criticise all the parties, including my own. I am sick of being the only woman in the room on so many occasions and having to shout so loud to have your voice heard when often you have more constructive things to say than a lot of the men sitting around you. I think that, first, we need to put women in winnable seats and offer support to existing women and those who are coming up through the ranks. Earlier, Fidelma spoke about having internal party quotas, and, in Sinn Féin, we do operate that system. I think that over 30% of our candidates for council across the island were women, and our Ard Comhairle, which is the national executive, is 50:50. However, there is still more that can be done, because, in the background, which is often where a lot of decisions are made, it is still far too male-focused. This, again, applies to all parties, particularly in the current context.
485. I think that, when we talk about peace-building, women absolutely need to be involved in the resolution of conflict-related issues. It is clear to see that peace-building is seen as an activity for men and for men alone, and we will not get anywhere for the next generation unless we involve women. Another small thing that the Assembly could maybe do is to ensure that all Committees have female representation and that delegations and working groups have females on them as well. For those who are giving evidence to a Committee, we should specify that we do not want an all-male panel sitting in front of a Committee but that we want to have diversity of opinion. There are two constituencies that have never ever had female representation, which is an absolute disgrace. I feel for the women in those areas.
486. I think that the most effective way to make all of this a reality is to introduce quotas. I know that not everyone will agree and that there are a lot of different opinions. Some people will say that they are unnecessary, and others will say that they are offensive to women. Another popularly held misconception, in my opinion, is that we should just continue to elect the best person for the job. I say that trying not to laugh, because look at where we are. I think that those criticisms would only be true if we were already on a level playing field, which, clearly, we are not. The North has a population of over 1.5 million people, and by saying that we should elect the best person for the job you are saying, effectively that, out of that massive pool of people, there are not 54 intelligent, capable and articulate women who could be right for the role of an MLA. That is just complete nonsense.
487. I think that quotas are the quickest and most effective way to ensure an equal number of men and women. They force the break up of elite circles of power, which we spoke about earlier. I think that allowing women in power to act as positive role models only encourages more women to step forward and to take that leap. I do not think that quotas discriminate against men, before anyone says that. I think that quotas are a way

- to correct existing discrimination that we have put up with for far too long. I think that the time for talking has been and gone. We need parties and we need the Government to commit to action so that we can see the changes that we need in our society. If we are being honest, we will only ever see those changes being brought about by women.
488. **Mrs Sandra Overend (Northern Ireland Assembly):** Thanks for the opportunity to address you here, and I am sorry that I was not here for the beginning of the event. I was at the Environment Committee this morning.
489. When it comes to women in politics, the situation at the Assembly and across local, national and all sections of government is far from where we want it to be. It is clear that women have pushed through the sticky door or the glass ceiling, or whatever metaphor you want to use, before and continue to do so, but, all too often, not enough manage to follow those pioneers through. As I have said in previous discussions like this, conditions need to be set up so that women are given the same chance of success in politics — and in the STEM sector, in business and so on — as men. This assistance is gained through ensuring that women are given the right support to allow them to succeed. When it comes to concrete actions to tackle this problem, I must state that I am not in favour of quotas. I do think that, obviously, we need more women in politics, but we also need better politicians. If we supported conditions where we got better politicians — women and men — and a more results-driven political world, more women would be more willing to get involved.
490. I want to touch on some of the work that the Ulster Unionist Party has undertaken. We admitted that we had a problem, and we worked on a number of initiatives to address that. It was for that reason that, back in 2009, as a party officer of the Ulster Unionist Party at that time, I launched the Dame Dehra Parker programme, a women's development programme born out of the desire to shake off the image of a party of grey suits. That women's development programme provided training in various policy areas, brought confidence-building measures and saw women taking a more prominent role in political activity in the party and more women standing for election. I am a result of that women's development programme. It seemed to backfire on me, but more about that later.
491. Last year, Jim Nicholson, our MEP, hosted a discursive event on quotas, encouraging women to fulfil their potential in all areas of society. At that event, we were told by Professor Galligan that we were the first political party to debate that issue in the public arena. Furthermore, at our party conference last weekend, I was delighted to be able to chair a fringe event entitled Women in Public Life, which involved Mairead McGuinness MEP and the female chair of the Queen's Young Unionists Association. Such events can play an important role in stimulating debate, engaging more women and encouraging them to come forward and become involved. Whilst we recognise that that task is not complete, the Ulster Unionist Party continues to work hard to address gender balance in public life. We have the programmes. We hold events. We select and support capable women candidates in elections and see many women elected time and again. We are committed to empowering our female members to have the confidence to become more politically active and to support and guide those who are keen to pursue an elected position.
492. If you have a minute, I will tell you my personal story. I had no ambition to become a politician. I had always been happy to work in the background as part of the team. I have heard the same story from so many of our female representatives. I had the passion for the job, but I did not have the desire to lead. However, the women's development programme that I hosted meant that I had to chair meetings, speak in front of meetings and speak to conference. These things were all new

- to me. However, my desire to improve the opportunities for women in my party meant that I had to do those things to help them. It backfired on me in that people said, “Why do you not do it? You could it. You have done all this. Why do you not go ahead and stand for elected position?” The vacancy came up in my constituency and I thought, “Right, I have to grab this opportunity that is in front of me. I do not think that I can do it, but sure I will give it a go, why not?”. That is how I got to be where I am.
493. Yesterday evening, I gave some thought to what has made it easier for me. The first thing is gaining experience in public speaking and understanding policy. The second thing is receiving encouragement and, therefore, building confidence and knowledge, which all helps you to push on and know that you are doing the right thing. With that comes the development of thicker skin. As a politician, you definitely need a thicker skin and to have the confidence to know that what you are doing is right and to pursue a particular goal, then you are able to withstand the criticism that comes with it.
494. Family back-up is the fourth aspect. I have a husband who is a farmer and has flexibility to help more with our children. My mum, my mother-in-law and my wider family all help and support me to do the job that I do. Because it is people who are close to me who are helping out with my children, I tend to worry less about them. I am not saying that I do not worry about them, but I worry less. They do all the homework, and quite often I know that it has been done the way that I would do it with them. That is a really important aspect.
495. A fifth point is deciding when and how to say no. When you come into this job, you want to do everything. You want to fulfil everybody’s expectations of you. It is so difficult. You could do with not just another hour in the day but another week in the month. It is just crazy. You do not want to say no, but you need to be able to weigh that up. You might be able to say no, but you also need to stop worrying about how that no is affecting that person. That is another aspect.
496. The final point is perfecting the work/life balance, which is impossible. Every now and again, I realise that I need a break. However, I forever feel that I need to apologise and explain why I am talking that hour off on the way home from work. The people who see me going into the shop in Magherafelt on the way home will not know that I have been up to 2.00 am the night before; it was 3.00 am by the time I got home on Monday night. You feel as if you have to explain everything to the public. You just need to develop the confidence to get on with the job and not feel that you have to explain everything. However, that is part of the politician’s role. We also have Stephen Nolan to criticise us at every turnaround.
497. To conclude, it is obvious that gender imbalance will not be solved overnight. We need to keep working together towards the same goal despite the differences that we have about how to get there. When I spoke in the Assembly debate on women in politics in March, I concluded that it is important that each one of us plays our part to inspire more women to lead. That is what I will continue to do for as long as I am involved in politics. As I often do at women in politics events like this, I challenge each one of you: all of you want to see more women in politics, so why do you not think about standing for election?
498. **Ms P Bradley:** Thank you. You will be glad to hear that I am the last person who you have to listen to today. I have been told to be short and sweet, because lunch was ready about half an hour ago. We are all running so late. As you can tell, as MLAs we all like to speak; that is not just female MLAs but all MLAs.
499. I am a member of the AER Committee. Two females sit on this Committee: Caitríona Ruane and myself. Of course, we have got the men, who, I have to say, are very supportive of what we are trying to do and achieve. As I was saying to my group earlier, we do not often get together as females to discuss things on a female basis. We tend to be part

- of parties and to belong to parties, and, of course, we were elected under parties. However, I have been away with the Committee on two Committee visits to Wales and Iceland to look at their women in politics. When Caitríona Ruane and I, who are totally different and poles apart on many things, sat down and discussed a lot of the issues, we discovered, “Hey, we are not that far apart. We need to work together as women to start to effect change in the Northern Ireland Assembly.” Even just that work with the Committee has brought me a step forward as a female and as a female politician to say, “Now it is time for us to sit down as female representatives from across the board and start to discuss these issues.”
500. I want to thank everybody who has attended today. It never ceases to amaze me. I attend so many events to do with women and women’s issues. There is not a week that goes by that I am not the guest speaker at something or other to do with women. Yet every time I have another roundtable debate, something new and different comes up. These events are a great advantage to us in the Committee.
501. You will have noticed a theme among the majority of the elected women in this room. Every one of us, or nearly all, were asked to put our name forward to run, whether for local council or up here in the Northern Ireland Assembly. We need to look at changing that attitude and break through it. We need to have women coming up to us and saying, “I want to do that job. I want to be part of that.” There are so many things that we need to put in place to change that.
502. Megan touched on lots of very good points to do with how women are portrayed in the media and culturally in society. Some of the points that were made at our table were about that and about the culture of women in Northern Ireland and what we are supposed to be — we are supposed to be in a box doing x, y and z — and the culture of women in politics and what we are supposed to be when it comes to being political leaders. We have some very good, strong women up here in the Northern Ireland Assembly — we also have some great men — who want to see that change effected as soon as possible.
503. Thank you again for all of your assistance on this. I can assure you that, along with our male colleagues, Caitríona and I will be fighting the good fight on the Committee to try to bring about and effect some change. I do not know how that is going to look — whether it will be part of a strategy, looking at targets or whatever. However, I can definitely assure you that the whole of the Committee will be working towards effecting that change for women in politics.
504. We have a lunch ahead of us that is probably either cold or burnt at this stage. I want to say a big thank-you to our panel as well. Some of them have been in front of our Committee. They come and speak to a lot of our female MLAs and our male MLAs. Every time that I hear from them, I am inspired to think, “This is why I am here. I am here for a reason. I am here to effect change in the Northern Ireland Assembly.” Thanks very much to all of you as well.
505. Without further ado, lunch is served.

4 November 2014

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
 Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
 Mr Roy Beggs
 Ms Paula Bradley
 Mr Paul Givan
 Mr Raymond McCartney
 Ms Caitríona Ruane

Witnesses:

Mr Michael Potter *Research and Information Service*

506. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** I invite Michael Potter to give his first presentation, after which members will have an opportunity to ask questions. Thank you, Michael.
507. **Mr Michael Potter (Research and Information Service):** This paper is on training and support measures for bringing more women into politics. It summarises some programmes that have been used to support women in politics and encourage them into politics in the context of the resolution by the Assembly on 10 March this year calling for the introduction of a training and support programme to encourage more female candidates to stand for election.
508. Before going into specifics, two points emerge from the research as key themes. The first is that training and support are seen as only one set of measures among many that are necessary to increase the participation of women in politics. As such, they should be seen as an enabling mechanism and not a solution. The second theme is that capacity-building for women to overcome barriers to participation assume women to be the problem, when, in fact, according to the research, it is the exclusive environment that is in need of change. Indeed, men may well also need training to create an environment that is more conducive to the participation of women.

509. Programmes supporting the participation of women tend to operate on three main levels. First, they provide practical assistance for the candidacy of women already involved in politics or, indeed, for them as elected representatives, to help address some of the barriers they face. Secondly, they help women who may be considering entering politics but need encouragement and capacity-building to take the first step. Thirdly, they raise awareness among women and girls generally that politics is a career not just for men but equally for women. Indeed, the programmes educate men that women should equally participate as well.
510. In the paper, I use three examples. The first is the DemocraShe programme that was used in Northern Ireland to work with women in political parties to build capacity to compete for electoral representation on an equal footing with men. The second is the Women in Local Councils initiative, which worked on a range of levels in Northern Ireland to build a framework for inclusion, develop and support female staff and elected representatives in local councils and connect with community-based initiatives to encourage women's participation. The third is Women for Election, which works in the Republic of Ireland on the three levels of political representatives, potential candidates and young women in general to promote the participation of women in politics.
511. I will speak briefly about the content of each of the programmes, but all the detail is in the paper.
512. DemocraShe was essentially a training and development programme that dealt with developing skills and confidence in areas such as electioneering and campaigns, fundraising, public speaking, media training, doorstepping, press release writing skills and the use of

- scenarios and role playing to embed those skills in women taking part.
513. Broadly, the Women in Local Councils initiative was much wider. It created a framework at local council level that included a declaration of equality principles and the promotion of a culture in which women feel able to participate fully; change champions in each council and in political parties to act as a focus for this work; gender action plans to offer concrete steps to increase women's participation; awareness-raising events to encourage participation, and direct training, mentoring or job shadowing.
514. Finally, the Women for Election initiative has four main programmes to operate at different points along the pipeline to promote more women to participate in politics. The INFORM programme works in universities to engage young women to participate in politics. INSPIRE is a programme to develop the capacity of women with an interest in politics. EQUIP is a programme that provides practical training for female candidates, providing core campaigning skills, and, more recently, ENGAGE comprises events designed to encourage political debate more widely in the population.
515. Key to the pipeline to political participation is the supply side from the community and, over the years, there has been a range of community-based initiatives generated through women's organisations locally in Northern Ireland. Currently, for example, there is the LEAD programme, which works on three levels from raising awareness to building political leadership skills and capacity building for participation. That has been developed as a partnership between women's organisations in the community here.
516. That is a brief overview, Chair. Do you want me to take questions on the papers individually or at the end?
517. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** I am happy that you take questions individually.
518. **Ms Ruane:** I think that this is a fantastic paper. There is nothing more off-putting to women than when a discussion comes up and someone says, "Oh, but the women do not want to do it", or "They do not have the confidence". You made a very profound point about training. I would argue that men need training more than women, or maybe a different type of training; so, I think that that is very good.
519. I was interested in your last points, on confidence and demystification. Before coming here — and I am sure that Paula will know this as well — you had the idea that this was an amazing place where fantastic ideas were talked about all the time, and they are, but we need to demystify, and that is very important. It is also about sustaining the pipeline, so that it is not just about lack of confidence.
520. I do not have a question, but I thought that it was a really good paper and one of the best that I have seen on this.
521. **Mr McCartney:** Is the DemocraShe programme still in place?
522. **Mr Potter:** The individuals involved in DemocraShe are still around and are involved in other programmes. The actual programme fell due to lack of funding, but all the stuff is there and is ready to go.
523. **Mr McCartney:** Is the Women in Local Councils initiative of 2006 still in place?
524. **Mr Potter:** Elements of it are still in place, because the framework was the main groundwork for that. They were put in place in the councils and are still there. They have events every International Women's Day to raise awareness, so it is still kind of there.
525. **Mr McCartney:** I ask this out of ignorance: was any particular form of training given to women who wanted to participate in politics with the formation of the new super-councils? Was there any particular programme?
526. **Mr Potter:** I do not know that.

527. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Can any comparison be made between DemocraShe, which has been around since 2000 and Women for Election, which was formed in 2011 in the Irish Republic, on how successful they have been?
528. **Mr Potter:** The evaluations that I have seen from the participants have been very positive. I have not heard anything negative about either programme. With regard to the content of the programmes, DemocraShe, because of its limited resources, was aimed directly at election cycles, and when the funding went, it went. Women for Election works at a multitude of levels; it gets funding, but it also charges for some of its programmes, so its sustainability is more secure.
529. **Ms P Bradley:** My question is along the same lines as yours, Chair. I am one of the DemocraShe students from 2000, and it gave me a lot of inspiration, as it did for many women. I know that quite a few women in the Chamber went through the programme at that time. It really explained the ins and outs of politics — voting, elections and all of those things, which we all know about in this country because we are brought up on them. However, it was good to get down to the nuts and bolts of how everything worked, and it certainly inspired me.
530. If we look at our numbers in the Chamber here, we see that all of the training programmes we have had over the years have not worked to the extent that they should have worked, because many women went through many, many training programmes on politics and were inspired to become politicians, but did not do so. They stopped dead. So, something more needs to be done. Training is important, and it is fantastic. As Caitríona said, men need to be doing this as well. We come to a brick wall, at which all of these inspired and wonderful women, who are more than capable, stop. It is about getting through that barrier. Looking at all these aspects, and at the Chamber, it has not worked, which is sad.
531. **Mr Beggs:** Thank you for your presentation. It is a useful briefing paper. What investment was there in each of the programmes? You mentioned that Women in Local Councils is still an annual event. Is any investment still happening, other than an annual flag-day-type thing? I am just trying to get a picture of what investment there has been and what there might need to be in the future.
532. **Mr Potter:** I do not know the exact costs of the programmes themselves. DemocraShe received a lot of money from the United States, and when that money dried up, it was really problematic for the continuation of the programme itself. For Women in Local Councils, much, initially, was about laying the frameworks. So, it was about putting gender action plans in place and having gender champions, who then became change champions for all kinds of diversity. As those things are now in place, it is really about continuing some of those processes in the day-to-day work of the councils, as I understand it, rather than actual outlay to extend it.
533. The Women for Election programme receives funding from a range of organisations, but it charges a nominal fee for all participants, and people are very happy to pay that.
534. **Mr Beggs:** You said that it gets funding from a range of organisations. Ultimately, is that money coming from public funds? Where does it come from?
535. **Mr Potter:** No, it is generally from private charities. They are all on the website. I can get a list for you, but there is a link that goes to the website and everyone who has funded them is listed there.
536. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Thank you, Michael. Do you want to move on to your second presentation, which is on job-sharing in political representation?
537. **Mr Potter:** Job-sharing in political office has been raised before in this Committee as a possible measure to promote the participation of women in politics. This paper summarises how the

- idea of job-sharing in politics has been approached elsewhere.
538. No current examples of job-sharing in politics were found during the research. However, there have been attempts to introduce the concept in Scotland and Westminster. Research carried out in 2013 to gauge public opinion on job-sharing found no great support for it, but, then again, no great opposition either. Generally, people did not have a view on whether it was a good or bad idea.
539. **(The Deputy Chairperson [Mr Sheehan] in the Chair):** In the 1999 election in Scotland, two candidates stood on the same ticket for the Highlands and Islands Alliance, which was a community-based alliance at the time. In the event, they were unsuccessful, but the returning officer stated that he would recognise only the first named candidate, not both. An employment tribunal found that the case could be included under sex discrimination provisions, but an appeal tribunal found that it did not have the jurisdiction to rule on the decision of a returning officer. So, the issue remains unresolved.
540. A private Member's Bill for job-sharing was introduced in the House of Commons by John McDonnell MP in 2012 but fell due to lack of time. Appendix 1 in my paper has the exact wording of that Bill as a kind of model. At this year's spring conference, the Liberal Democrats expressed a commitment to introduce legislation for job-sharing at Westminster in the next Parliament. They did not mention whether they would be in government at the time, but that is what they said.
541. Briefly, here are some arguments for and against job-sharing that have been made during debates. There have been various debates regarding the issue, most recently resulting from the Scottish example, the initial debate in the House of Commons for the private Member's Bill, and in the media, following the announcement by the Liberal Democrats of their intentions this year. What has been problematic is that the arguments for and against are tempered by specific arrangements under which job-sharing might operate rather than the principle itself. Much hinges on the exact agreement between the two Members in question and, significantly, on how a party selects and regulates such partnerships.
542. There are broad arguments against job-sharing. They include that, where a week is split, job-sharing may be difficult where a constituency is far away because constituents there may be confused or end up going to both representatives. Also, it would be unfair to have two representatives in some constituencies and one in others. For example, would there be two sets of parliamentary questions, or could both people speak in the same debate? Politics requires full-time commitment, and politicians have to remain on top of issues on a full-time basis. The representatives may not agree, not argue points or not vote consistently. Job-sharing may attract representatives from professions where people want to pursue their own career and do politics part time, rather than provide for excluded groups, which would be the intention of introducing it. Representatives may not follow business consistently, for example if they share a seat on a Committee. What would happen if one of them changed parties or resigned? Also, would both be entitled to expenses and resources? For example, sharing a week would entail two sets of travel expenses.
543. All those points have been challenged, primarily through the nature of the arrangement that could exist. Rather than split the week, representatives could go week about. Rather than being confused, constituents could have more opportunity to speak to a representative, and the benefit of having two for the price of one has been stated. Rather than doubling up in the Chamber, an agreement could be reached on who would attend which debates, and, by extension, they may take a Committee each. Specific processes

- might be introduced to adjudicate on disagreements between the two people involved in the arrangement. Agreements could also be made regarding other eventualities, such as both stepping down when one resigns or changes parties. There could be stipulations about one set of expenses and resources being shared between the two. It is all about the arrangement rather than the principle.
544. Added to those defences against critics is the principle that job-sharing may attract people who, due to circumstances, cannot work on a full-time basis. As such, job-sharing has gained the support of organisations promoting women's participation and disability advocacy organisations. More detailed arguments for and against were presented in the House of Commons debate on John McDonnell's Bill and they are in appendix 2 of the paper. That is about it, Deputy Chair.
545. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Sheehan):** Thank you Michael.
546. **Mr Beggs:** I seek clarification on where any such decision on this matter would be determined. I am conscious that when we talked about electoral issues in the past, we made representations on legislation that was happening at Westminster. Will you clarify whether this issue is in the gift of the Northern Ireland Assembly or is determined by UK national electoral law at Westminster?
547. **Mr Potter:** It is an excepted matter under the Northern Ireland Act 1998, so representation to change it would have to be made to Westminster.
548. **Ms Ruane:** Presumably, there would be nothing to stop our Committee recommending it, if that were to be the agreement of the Committee. I do not know our party position on this because it is a discussion that we have yet to have. Instinctively, I think that there are some very interesting points in this about mentoring, gender, diversity and whatever. You will always find reasons to go for or against something and, as I think your paper states, there are procedural arrangements that can be made. Some of the questions in appendix 2 on the arguments around John McDonnell's Bill — he obviously supports job-sharing — are more relevant to the first-past-the-post system. Our electoral system is a bit different. Will you talk briefly about how it may or may not be easier to do this in our system?
549. **Mr Potter:** Do you mean in terms of having six Members in —
550. **Ms Ruane:** Well, six Members, but also the way that we co-opt. In England, it is first past the post, and if someone resigns or dies in post there is an election, whereas here there can be co-option, which obviously makes things like job-sharing easier.
551. **Mr Potter:** I would not like to shoot from the hip on that one. There has been no research and no debate on it in the context of Northern Ireland or, indeed, a context like Northern Ireland's. The closest was Scotland, and there was some discussion on how it would happen there. So, I do not feel equipped to answer that point yet but I can look into it.
552. **Ms Ruane:** Yes, but do you see the point?
553. **Mr Potter:** Yes, absolutely.
554. **Mr McCartney:** I have just one question. Is there any example where it is currently in place?
555. **Mr Potter:** Not that I found, no.
556. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Sheehan):** Michael, you have a third paper, I believe, on sitting times in the Swedish Riksdag. The floor is yours.
557. **Mr Potter:** Apologies for the delay on this one; I was waiting for a reply from the Swedish Parliament on some details.
558. A question was asked, when I was presenting the paper on the Swedish elections, about the exact sitting times for Sweden, as it is held up as an example of family-friendly policies.

- During the meeting on 7 October, I was asked for the sitting dates and times of the Swedish Riksdag as those are considered to be family-friendly. The Riksdag sits two days a week, as we do here, but the agenda is set as far in advance as possible and votes generally take place at a set time of 4.00 pm on each sitting day to allow for planning for things like travel and family care.
559. Recess is generally arranged for school holiday periods — Christmas, Easter and summer. We also have Halloween. In addition, there is a plenary-free week each month, which is generally aimed, where applicable, to coincide with school holidays.
560. In terms of sitting times, debates are not to go past 11.00 pm. That said, parliamentary business takes precedence, and, when there is a need, the provisions can be suspended. For example, in busy periods of legislation, the Riksdag might end up meeting every day of the week. Fifty-one plenaries in the last parliamentary session went beyond 6.00 pm.
561. I will give you a quick comparison with the arrangements in the Northern Ireland Assembly. In normal operation, both sit two days a week. The time limit here is usually 6.00 pm, but it is 11.00 pm in the Riksdag. We have an extra period of recess at Halloween, but the Riksdag has a plenary-free week every month. The Riksdag also has scheduled times for voting. That is not always adhered to but, whenever they can adhere to it they do so.
562. It is about planning well in advance. If you look at the calendar on the Riksdag website you will see that a lot of the debates are already scheduled for the next year, with particular voting times during the year. I know — how do they do that? At the same time, if there is a need for parliamentary business, they will change it.
563. In both cases, the provisions can be suspended. The table on page 3 of the paper shows that debates in the Chamber here went beyond 6.00 pm on 35 occasions in 2013. So, in broad terms, there are family-friendly provisions in both legislatures, but they are contingent on parliamentary necessity. The main difference is the plenary-free week every month in the Riksdag, the scheduling of business and, particularly, having a set time for voting.
564. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Sheehan):** Thanks for that, Michael. I have just one question out of curiosity. Do they have an electronic voting system?
565. **Mr Potter:** That is a good question. I will get back to you on that one, Chair.
566. **Mr McCartney:** In the Swedish experience, are there Committee days?
567. **Mr Potter:** Yes. Committees are arranged, as far as possible, along family-friendly lines when they are organising business of individual Committees.
568. **Mr McCartney:** Are those on a Friday or a Monday or Tuesday, or are they on plenary days?
569. **Mr Potter:** I am not sure about particular Committees. I imagine that some will be just as they are here.
570. **Mr Beggs:** I want to enquire further on the electronic voting, because that could make our Assembly more family-friendly. I am conscious that, particularly when there are multiple votes, it can extend the sitting by hours, particularly when legislation is going through and lots of amendments are being considered. That issue is relevant to this subject. We have the times that the Riksdag sits to. What time does it start?
571. **Mr Potter:** It is all in Swedish unfortunately, but I checked the calendar and they start at 9.00 am. They do not seem quite as family-friendly as you might think.
572. **Ms P Bradley:** Thank you again. It is another great paper from you. I sit on the Procedures Committee, where we have already debated electronic voting and the working times of the Assembly. When we looked across the Assemblies

and Parliaments, ours was one of the better ones, especially in light of starting at 9.00 am, which is fine for me who lives 15 or 20 minutes along the road but not so fine for others who have some distance to travel. When we looked at the times, the Committee business and all the things we do here, we saw that our times are actually not bad at all.

573. **Mr Potter:** Yes, with respect to the stipulations in Standing Orders, that is the case. The key message I got from the Riksdag is that, wherever they can be flexible, they are flexible, particularly on Committee sittings, planning trips, planning Committee business, and stuff like that but also in the sense of trying to plan as much in advance as they can. There is a lot in the parliamentary calendar that you cannot plan in advance. However, they have a set time for voting so that people know when they need to be there, although, again, that cannot always be adhered to.
574. **Ms P Bradley:** I agree with looking at having a set time for voting. That would assist greatly, especially, as Roy said, when we have multiple votes in a Bill's passage through the House. We all know what it is like to sit here until 1.00 am or 2.00 am, as we did recently for the Human Trafficking Bill, which involved a lot of votes. That would be beneficial, and maybe we should look at it further. In the Procedures Committee, all parties looked at everything to see how we could either move that or do this differently. Every time, we came back with the conclusion that our system is actually quite good.
575. **Ms Ruane:** There is an interesting point about school holidays. I agree with Paula. We are strongly family-friendly here, which I like. However, that does not mean that there are not ways that we can improve it, and we need to look at ways of doing that.
576. It would be worth putting something in our report around education and having school holidays at the same time. The problem is that, currently, each school board of governors or school system determines its own holidays. That is a nightmare for parents, especially given that we have a lot of single-sex schools. You could have one child in one school on holiday last week and another in another school on holiday this week. Added to that, we have probably one of the worst childcare systems in the whole of Europe. I would love to see a recommendation about exploring school holidays and how they are taken and maybe that we legislate for that or have a discussion with the Department of Education around how we do it. That would make a big difference.
577. **Mr Beggs:** I want to enquire further on the issue of scheduled voting times. What is the practice generally, other than in the Riksdag? I am not fully aware of the how it operates in each of the local Governments.
578. **Mr Potter:** From what I can decipher from their yearly calendar, the Riksdag has set times for particular debates. They have debating times and then they have voting times, so those can sometimes be divorced slightly. However, I have not actually seen it in process — it is all in Swedish anyway — so I am not sure exactly how it works.
579. **Mr Beggs:** I am interested as much in the situation in Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland. What happens there? Are there any difficulties in going one way or the other?
580. **Mr Potter:** I would have to look at that in detail.
581. **Mr Sheehan:** Maybe we need to go and see the Riksdag in action. *[Laughter.]*
582. **Ms Ruane:** We were in Scotland with the Assembly Commission. There, they vote at the end of the day. In Iceland, they vote at a particular time.
583. **The Assistant Committee Clerk:** They have plenary meetings five days a week.
584. **Mr McCartney:** I was on the Procedures Committee in the last mandate, and we did an extensive piece of work on electronic voting. The biggest minus is the cost. I think it was going to cost

- something like £2 million to rearrange things, because you need to have special seating arrangements, desks and so on. While it would be a far better system, one of the big fears was about spending £2 million in the current climate to make it easier for us to vote. You can see the minuses as well.
585. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Sheehan):** We would get more work done.
586. **Mr Beggs:** Technology may have moved on since then.
587. **Ms P Bradley:** As a side comment, when we were on our Committee visit to Wales, I spoke to someone in that building and asked whether they had electronic voting, which they do. I said that the Procedures Committee was looking at it at that time. The person said to me, “Well, just be warned that it can be extremely difficult with some members pressing the wrong buttons and putting in the wrong codes because they are sitting in a different chair”. He said that the voting procedures end up taking three times as long as they would if you were going through a lobby. He said, “If you are looking at it, look at all of those things as well because human error is a big factor. It is not going to quicken up your voting in any way”.
588. **Mr McCartney:** In Leinster House, they went for a very simple system. The issue of mistakes and reruns came up, but, rather than having a complicated system, they just went for a simple yes-and-no system, with a big screen behind the Ceann Comhairle showing the results so that you could double-check.
589. **Ms P Bradley:** Well, apparently, in Wales, there are people in the Chamber who have to go and give assistance.
590. **Mr McCartney:** Is that because they do not know how to do it?
591. **Ms P Bradley:** Yes. There are problems associated with it that we maybe do not think of.
592. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Sheehan):** Finally, Michael, are there childcare facilities in the Riksdag for Members?
593. **Mr Potter:** Yes, that is the key thing. They have a kindergarten in the Riksdag, and, anyway, Sweden has a state childcare system that is more or less universal. That mitigates some of it.
594. **The Deputy Chairperson (Mr Sheehan):** Thanks very much, Michael. That was very helpful as usual.

17 February 2015

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Stephen Moutray (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradley
Mr Trevor Lunn
Mr Raymond McCartney
Ms Caitríona Ruane
Mr Robin Swann

595. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** I now propose that we consider, for agreement, in the presence of Hansard, the final text of the draft report section by section.

596. Are members content with the covering pages, the executive summary and conclusions section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

597. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with the summary of recommendations section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

598. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with the introduction section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

599. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with the Committee's approach to the review section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

600. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with the Committee's scrutiny section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

601. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with the Committee's consideration of key barriers and challenges section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

602. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with the Committee's consideration of positive actions section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

603. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with the conclusions and recommendations section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

604. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with the glossary of terms section of the report?

Members indicated assent.

605. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with appendix 1 to the report, the extract of minutes and proceedings?

Members indicated assent.

606. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with appendix 2 to the report, the minutes of evidence?

Members indicated assent.

607. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with appendix 3 to the report, the stakeholder submissions?

Members indicated assent.

608. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content with appendix 4 to the report, the correspondence and other papers relating to the review?

Members indicated assent.

609. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Finally, are members content with appendix 5 to the report, the Assembly research papers?

Members indicated assent.

610. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Thank you. I inform members that the report

will be the sixth report of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee to the Assembly. The final version of the report will be proofread once more before it is ordered to be printed. Are members content for the Committee's secretariat to make any changes to typing errors and the format of the report where necessary? These will have no effect on the substance of the report and are purely for the purposes of formatting and the accuracy of the text. Are members agreed?

Members indicated assent.

611. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** The extract of minutes of proceedings and minutes of evidence from Hansard from today's meeting will have to be included in the report. Are members content for me, as the Chairperson of the Committee, to approve the extract of the minutes of proceedings from today's meeting for inclusion in the report?

Members indicated assent.

612. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content for the Hansard edition of this meeting to be included in the report as there is insufficient time for members to review the transcript before publication?

613. **Ms Ruane:** Sorry, say that one again.

614. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content for the Hansard edition of this meeting to be included in the report as there is insufficient time for members to review the transcript before publication?

615. **Ms Ruane:** Yes, sorry.

Members indicated assent.

616. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** I propose that the Secretary of State, the First Minister, the deputy First Minister and the leaders of the political parties of the Assembly be forwarded a copy of the final embargoed report as soon as it is available. Are members agreed?

Members indicated assent.

617. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content for the Committee secretariat to forward an embargoed electronic version of the report with an appropriate covering letter from me, as the Chairperson, to the Secretary of State, the First Minister, the deputy First Minister and the leaders of the political parties of the Assembly?

Members indicated assent.

618. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** As the Committee is now in the position to formally agree that the report be printed and published, the Committee needs to decide if it wishes the report to be debated and noted in plenary or move straight to publication.

619. **Ms Ruane:** Debated.

620. **Ms P Bradley:** Debated.

621. **Mr Lunn:** Sorry, does that mean that it will be debated before or after publication?

622. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** It means debated at all.

623. **Mr Lunn:** It must be after publication.

624. **The Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk:** The report would be embargoed until the debate in the Chamber.

625. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** OK. Are members content that it is debated?

Members indicated assent.

626. **Ms Ruane:** When is that likely to happen?

627. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** I am coming to that now.

628. **Ms Ruane:** OK.

629. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** We now move to consideration of the draft motion for the debate of the report in Assembly plenary, the text of which is in members' packs. Are members content with the wording of the draft motion for the debate of the report in the Assembly plenary and that the Committee requests Monday 9 March 2015, the day

after International Women's Day, for the debate?

630. **Ms Ruane:** Perfect.

631. **Ms P Bradley:** Perfect.

632. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members agreed?

Members indicated assent.

633. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** Are members content that the Committee should order its report on the review of women in politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly to be printed following today's meeting and that hard copies be kept to a minimum in the interests of efficiency? I ask members whether they are content that a note be put in the Business Office today to signal that two embargoed manuscript copies of the report will be laid in the Business Office by close of business tomorrow. Are members agreed?

Members indicated assent.

634. **The Chairperson (Mr Moutray):** I inform members that the report should be returned by the printer and distributed to all MLAs once printed. The report will, of course, be embargoed until the commencement of the plenary debate. Are members agreed?

635. **Ms Ruane:** Will all the witnesses get a printed copy?

636. The Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk: I will need to double-check that. There will be full copies and slim copies. I think that those who came to brief the Committee will receive a copy. As with all reports, it will, of course, also be available on the Committee's website, only after it has been debated in plenary.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 3

Stakeholder Submissions

Political Parties of the Assembly

Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (Revised Submission)

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder ‘Call for Evidence’ Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

Contents

Section 1: Stakeholder Details and Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

Section 2: Introduction

- Powers
- Assembly and Executive Review Committee’s Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review.
- Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

Section 3: Background

- Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Section 4: Questions to consider

Section 5: Additional Information

Section 6: Contact Details

Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Alliance Party of Northern Ireland	Telephone Number:			
Stakeholder Address	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)			
	Registered Political Party	X	Local Government	
	Academic		Government	
	Legislature		Non-Government	
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public			

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

The Alliance Party is Northern Ireland's fifth largest political party, with two Ministerial portfolios in the Northern Ireland Executive, eight seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly, one in the House of Commons, and 43 local councillors.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above. This will include evidence from Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:

- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

¹ http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Alliance note that the proportion of female politicians elected to public bodies is roughly similar to the proportion of candidates. The issue is not therefore with the electorate, who

appear to be as likely to elect female politicians as male ones. Therefore the issues lie with encouraging women to stand in the first instance.

Alliance believe numerous barriers exist to this; such as expectations of time a candidate need commit, especially if they are the primary care-giver to a child. Likewise, the tendency to value a history of party political activity over other types of experience for selection is a problem. Finally, we believe that the argumentative and grand-standing nature of much of NI politics is off-putting to many women.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Part of our experience of other countries where women are more adequately represented suggests that this is linked with greater representation for women in senior positions in a wider range of social and economic sectors.

Therefore, it is appropriate that we consider similar programmes to not just those countries political processes but also other sectors that have helped raise the profile of women.

For Alliance, this must be based around encouraging women to put themselves forward in the first instance as well as supporting them in a role once they are elected.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

See below.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

Alliance has made a proactive approach to encouraging women to stand. In the first instance, this has been informal, but has involved encouraging women in the party who would be appropriate to put their name forward for this election. As a result, we have seen a number of women elected to positions.

However, we are also aware that Alliance has a way to go in reaching gender parity. As a result we have established a women's section to ensure that there is available support to women who wish to stand and a mechanism for ensuring that women's voices are heard in our party committees.

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

We believe that a form of mentoring scheme, within political parties, would be appropriate. However, this must include at a local government level as well, because there is a need to ensure women progress through the party at a local government level as well. As many MLAs are former councillors, failure to do so will mean less progress is made.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

Alliance is pleased to have had several high profile women in their Assembly group. This includes the first (and so far only) female Speaker. As a result, we have demonstrated that we are willing to promote women within the party.

It is important to note that the women who have enhanced their role from Alliance have done so through merit, but Alliance has tried to encourage women in doing so.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

Following Assembly elections, the Assembly should consider an anonymous survey to all candidates to express their experiences of being a candidate. This could help identify if men or women have had different experiences.

Likewise, Alliance believes that the conduct and procedures in the Assembly could be off-putting to women and could be reviewed.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

Alliance are strong supporters of equal representation for women (and other groups which are currently underrepresented) in Northern Ireland Assembly. As a result, we welcome this inquiry. Across all parties, women politicians have made substantial contributions to the political system. We seek to improve their representation within our own ranks and hope that the inquiry will be able to assist us, and other parties, with this.

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Democratic Unionist Party DUP

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Democratic Unionist Party DUP	Telephone Number: 02890471155		
Stakeholder Address 91 Dundela Avenue Belfast BT4 3BU	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party	X	Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

The Democratic Unionist Party is the largest party in Northern Ireland holding seats in Local Council, Northern Ireland Assembly, Westminster and European Parliament.

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Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

The DUP recognises that women are underrepresented in all levels of government in proportion to demographics.

We believe that Women face many challenges in entering politics in Northern Ireland including cultural and societal. Politics is portrayed and often accepted by many in society as very much a male career choice with little or no encouragement given to women from an early age to participate in the political arena.

Women in Northern Ireland are still stereotyped as the main care givers within the home and this can impede women into entering politics due to issues around childcare and also care for older relatives. This, in line with time commitments as an elected representatives can be seen as overwhelming and in turn off putting for many Women.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Many female elected members of the DUP have taken part in the various initiatives most notably the DemocraSHE programme some years past which motivated female party activists into considering a career in politics.

Recognition should also be given to QUB Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics, WRDA, WINI, NIWEP and Youth Action in there continuing endeavours promoting the advancement of women in politics.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

See 3(b).

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

The DUP are actively working within their party to promote and encourage Women in Political life.

- The Party have in place a specific Womens committee in which all female party members are encouraged to join in order to engage and promote women in political decision making. This committee also holds its own annual conference and has an role at the main Party conference.
- The Party leader and Party Officers made the decision to place all of its Female MLAs into prominent positions within the assembly in order to raise their profile and provide positive role models for others within the party.
- In the 2011 Assembly elections the DUP selected five constituencies that they believed had winnable seats and placed Women to run resulting in three extra Women being elected.

The DUP are also actively working within communities through their engagement with the Voluntary and Community sector. Female and Male representatives participate regularly In events to promote Female participation at all levels of government.

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

- Mentoring
- Gender Champions
- Community education and training
- Promoting Female role models

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

See (6).

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

We believe that some work could be undertaken by the Assembly along with the media to identify specific issues where they can work together to tackle the gender stereotypes of politics and also Women in leadership roles in general. This would assist in profiling Women within the assembly and would encourage other Women to see Politics as a serious career choice.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Green Party NI

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Green Party	Telephone Number: 028 9052 1467		
Stakeholder Address Room 258, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party	X	Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

The Green Party in Northern Ireland supports and economy for people and planet, and a politics for the common good. We are committed to social justice, sustainability, grassroots democracy and non violence. Gender equality is crucial to our vision and we have just adopted a new Women's Equality Strategy, which is attached to this submission for information. It includes a Women's Forum, a system of targets and quotas, a mentoring system, training, and support for carers (both female and male).

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above**. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

¹ http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

In Northern Ireland, it is unusual for anyone to be involved in party politics and more so for women. If women do get involved, they face sexism both within and outside their parties and this may erode already fragile self-confidence. Women in Northern Ireland are still expected to provide the majority of caring and domestic tasks such as childcare and caring for elderly relatives, which takes time and may also have affected their career paths and therefore their financial status and skills base. If women are elected to public office, they may find the adversarial nature of political debate to be challenging and to include sexist comments and assumptions. The difficulty of long hours and travelling between the constituency and Assembly/ Westminster/ Brussels can be difficult in relation to family life. At worst, sexual harassment and sexual violence can occur, but women may find they are judged on their appearance in a way that is difficult to cope with.

Statistics on women's involvement in the Assembly and other elected bodies has been provided by Assembly Research and Information Service papers. It is notable that the proportion of women in the Assembly is lower than that in the other devolved bodies or at Westminster.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

No, but we understand the Committee has been in touch with local organisations such as DemocraShe and the Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics (QUB) as part of the consultation process.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

See 3(b).

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

An abridged version of the Green Party's new policy is attached as a separate document.

The political rationale for the Strategy is that **increasing women's involvement is ultimately about challenging ingrained power structures, networks and relationships which privilege men.**

This Women's Involvement Strategy aims to increase the involvement of women in the Green Party in Northern Ireland. It sets out a series of policies and related actions in order to:

- Ensure the party presents itself as 'woman friendly' in recruitment literature and other publicity
- Actively welcome new women members and create an environment in which women are encouraged to participate in both administrative and electoral roles at local, regional, national and international levels
- Provide suitable training and support to allow women to become active at the level that suits them
- Adopt a mixture of targets and quotas to support structural change
- Take decisive action on sex discrimination and violence against women, wherever it occurs.

This document is only about women, but the same approach could be applied to other underrepresented groups and we resolve to do so in future. We recognise the phenomenon of intersectionality, through which some women will experience multiple forms of discrimination through their class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability or other elements of their identity or lifestyle.

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

The ultimate responsibility for increasing women's involvement lies with the political parties, who need to train and encourage women to stand in winnable seats and to encourage them once elected. However, there is the possibility that the Assembly could adopt a quota system as has the Dail in the Irish Republic, where 30 per cent of each party's representatives must be women after the next election or a fine will be paid. The figure will rise to 40 per cent over time.

It is difficult to decide whether such a measure would gain public support in Northern Ireland's socially conservative society, however on balance it would encourage parties to take action and should probably be adopted. The Green Party has participated in consultation on

the Review Committee's work so far, and we think all parties genuinely want to improve the position of women in politics, so an overall quota might be helpful.

Other useful initiatives would include:

- an in house crèche (for staff and members of both sexes – many staff go on to have political careers)
- firm politics and action on sexual harassment and on sexist comments in debate
- resources for training and mentoring
- Consideration of Assembly sittings only in normal working hours, although this may not always be practical.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

All those listed in response to question 4 plus specific training on public speaking and media.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

See answer to question 4.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

The Green Party's new Women's Involvement Strategy is attached.

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Green Party - SHORT Changing the Conversation for web site and public

Changing the Conversation: A Pathways Approach to Increasing Women's Involvement in the Green Party in Northern Ireland

1. Introduction

As a socially progressive party, the Green Party in Northern Ireland recognises that women are under-represented in political decision-making structures and in party politics more generally, and that this has to change. We acknowledge that the UK, and Northern Ireland in particular, is not in the vanguard of women's political participation and that therefore the wider environment in which we seek to promote women's involvement is somewhat challenging.

We also know that we as a party need to do more. Our single MLA is male. In the 2014 European elections, our candidate was male. In the local elections, we fielded 14 candidates, of whom 4 (29%) were women. Of our 5 priority candidates, two were women (40%). Of the four candidates elected, one (25%) is a woman. This is in line with the average of 23% female representation in NI local government. We now have five elected representatives, of whom one (20%) is female. On the administrative side, the Party Leader is male, the Party Chair and Chair of the Young Greens are both female. There are 17 EC members, of whom 6 (35%) are female. The other female officers are the Membership Secretary and the Equalities Officer.

Political rationale, policy aim and objectives

The political rationale for the Strategy is that increasing women's involvement is ultimately about challenging ingrained power structures, networks and relationships which privilege men.

This Women's Involvement Strategy aims to increase the involvement of women in the Green Party in Northern Ireland. It sets out a series of policies and related actions in order to:

- Ensure the party presents itself as 'woman friendly' in recruitment literature and other publicity
- Actively welcome new women members and create an environment in which women are encouraged to participate in both administrative and electoral roles at local, regional, national and international levels
- Provide suitable training and support to allow women to become active at the level that suits them
- Adopt a mixture of targets and quotas to support structural change
- Take decisive action on sex discrimination and violence against women, wherever it occurs.

This document is only about women, but the same approach could be applied to other underrepresented groups and we resolve to do so in future. We recognise the phenomenon of intersectionality, through which some women will experience multiple forms of discrimination through their class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability or other elements of their identity or lifestyle.

2. Why is it important to involve women in politics?

There is still a need to counter the argument that if women appear to choose not to become involved in politics to the same extent as men, then that should be accepted. Reasons why it is important to take steps to increase women's participation include:

- Social justice: all groups in society should be able to participate in politics

- Legitimacy of the political process: legitimacy is enhanced by a broad reflection of the composition of the population
- Experiences and priorities: all groups should see their identities, perspectives and priorities reflect in the political process
- Appeal and relevance of politics: is enhanced by the involvement of all groups¹
- National and international policy: such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Good Friday/ Belfast Agreement (1998) and Northern Ireland's Gender Equality Strategy, recognise the right of women to political participation
- Expediency: A review of the 2011 Assembly elections found that women candidates generally gained more votes than their male counterparts, with the low overall numbers elected due to the lower number of candidates².

Six points from our own consultation.....

- Low levels of women's involvement is a problem for men as well as women: the whole party needs to own this issue and be part of addressing it. In particular, it requires leadership from elected representatives, key officers and the EC.
- Lack of involvement is not just about childcare or caring responsibilities more generally: if this were so, there wouldn't be a problem with the number of women in politics, for example half of the House of Commons or the Dáil could be female. But they would be without dependents. Although we need to provide practical support for people with caring responsibilities, it is also to the point that....
- Women are excluded from informal networks and this can lead to them being overlooked, for example when appointments are made informally. This is why we need targets and quotas, although they should not be necessary in an ideal world. They will make women feel GPNi is serious about their involvement and may encourage some women to come forward who otherwise would not.
- Many women do lack confidence because they are not used to being in leadership positions: so they need to be asked and encouraged to do things... sometimes repeatedly. This is why mentoring and role models are important, for example no all male panels in public meetings.
- Although women are interested in all areas of policy – not just 'women's issues', there is often a different perspective on policy from female experience and this need to be included in policy development. However, we should not assume that women always agree about everything!
- Violence against women is real: Sexual harassment and worse can occur even in progressive parties and other environments. The most important aspect of promoting women's involvement is that it must be safe for women to participate.

3. Policy proposals

It is suggested that a number of new policies are adopted, within a Pathways approach in order to encourage women to become involved to the level that suits them. The policies are:

1 Durose, C., Gains, F., Richardson, L., Combs, R., Broome, K. and Eason, C. (2011) Pathways to Politics, Research Report no. 65, London: Equality and Human Rights Commission http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/research/pathways_to_politics.pdf

2 Northern Ireland Assembly (2014) Assembly and Executive Review Committee: Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review [of] Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/reviews/Women-in-Politics/AERC-call-for-evidence-final.pdf>

Communications, policy, recruitment and general campaigning

- (i) All strategies at local and regional level to present GPNI as a woman-friendly party and to ensure women are included in all publicity

Mentoring, training and support

- (i) A Women's Forum with an automatic EC place and right to nominate, along with a budget (some of which will have to be raised by the group); women only
- (ii) A Mentoring Scheme, run through the Women's Forum and including women external to GPNI if they have appropriate experience e.g. for elected representatives
- (iii) Acknowledge that women may have a different path of political involvement due to caring responsibilities, in particular they may take an 'activist break' and should be encouraged to return
- (iv) Caring costs to be paid for all official meetings (includes for male carers) and crèches for all General Meetings

Candidate selection

- (i) Contested selection meetings to include at least one female candidate, or nominations process to be extended by a further 2 weeks
- (ii) Local groups and GPNI EC to ensure selection processes are run in a non-discriminatory fashion and Selection Conventions to include at least one female GPNI EC observer OR Women's Forum observer

Structural change through targets and quotas

Targets:

- 50% women members
- 40% women officers in local groups [move to quota in 2 years]
- 40% women on EC

Quotas:

- At least one woman in all policy forums
- Leader and Deputy Leader must include at least one woman
- 33% women in priority seats and 40% women candidates overall; in elections where there are only 2 target seats, at least one candidate must be female [builds on existing 40% target overall]
- At least one of EC Chair Secretary and Treasurer should be female

Evaluation

- (i) Annual evaluation by Equalities Officer in conjunction with EC and Women's Forum
- (ii) EC ultimately responsible for implementation and annual report to AGM.

Resources

- (i) Women's Forum to have a small budget from the EC and to fund-raise separately
- (ii) Central budget to pay for carers' costs/ crèche
- (iii) Women's Forum and other supporters to research other sources of funds and practical support including working with other Green Parties on these islands and with local groups outside GPNI where appropriate.

4. Changing the Conversation: A Pathways Approach to Increasing Women's Involvement in the Green Party in Northern Ireland

Note: This approach to party development is in no way intended to devalue the contribution of women who choose to limit their involvement due to other commitments. Rather, it is intended to support and encourage all women members to make the contribution they feel is best for them.

Pathway level	Related policies	Evaluation at AGM
1. Encourage women to join GPNI through presenting us as a woman-friendly party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EC Communications Strategy to take into account need for relevant stories and use of women members for quotes etc. • Recruitment material to specifically encourage women (and other underrepresented groups) • Local groups and GPNI EC to consider initiatives to involve women as part of their recruitment and communications strategies • Establishment of regional Women's Forum including EC place and right to motions etc. – to be publicised in recruitment material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased no. of women joining • Target of 50% women members
2. Welcome women members and encourage them to get actively involved at local level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new members (not just women) to be actively welcomed by local group and encouraged to get involved – part of membership strategy. Could include a women's event • Local groups to periodically review suitability of meeting places, times and content • Carers' costs to be covered at all official meetings – if agreed, need also to agree cost ceiling and process • All women members automatically to be members of the Women's Forum and added to mailing list • Opportunity to join Women's Forum mentoring scheme and training events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover of women members • Take-up of carers' costs for local meetings • Examples of good practice to be shared • Take-up of mentoring scheme and training • Target of 40% women in administrative positions in local groups [we actually have a quota for this – move to quota in 2 years]
3. Encourage women to take up regional level posts or above within GPNI (EC, Young Greens, Women's Forum, policy forums etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All local and regional groups to actively encourage women to stand for regional bodies • Regional groups to periodically review suitability of meeting places, times and content • Women's Forum mentoring scheme and training events • Carers' costs • Women's Forum to have nomination rights to AGM • GPNI EC to take action to ensure quota is met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take-up of carers' costs, mentoring scheme and training • Quota: At least one woman in all policy forums • Target of 40% women on GPNI EC and quota: at least one of EC Chair Secretary and Treasurer to be female • Quota: Leader & Deputy Leader to include at least one woman

Pathway level	Related policies	Evaluation at AGM
4. Encourage women to stand for election	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All local and regional groups to actively encourage women to put themselves forward as candidates; Women's Forum to organise appropriate training for potential candidates • Mentoring scheme - including possibility of approaching external mentors sympathetic to GPNI with experience of electoral politics • Contested selection meetings to include at least one female candidate, or nominations process extended by a further 2 weeks • Local groups and GPNI EC to ensure selection processes are run in a non-discriminatory fashion; Selection Conventions to include at least one female GPNI EC observer OR Women's Forum observer • Carer's costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take-up of carers' costs for regional level meetings • Take-up of mentoring scheme and training • Quota of 33% women in priority seats and 40% women candidates overall; in elections where there are only 2 target seats, at least one candidate must be female [builds on existing 40% overall]
5. Support women in high profile elected or administrative positions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's Forum, mentoring, carer's costs and training as above • Support and advice from Media and Communications Director 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnover of women in high profile positions
6. At all stages – take action on sex discrimination & violence against women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include general policy on harassment and sexual violence in GPNI Constitution 	

SDLP



Submission

AERC Consultation on Women in Politics

1. What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Women for Election the Dublin based not for profit non-partisan group working to train and equip women to run for election. They cite international research that identifies the '5Cs' as the reasons for the under-representation of women in electoral politics. These are confidence; cash; candidate selection procedures; culture and childcare. Women for Election also cite 2009 research by the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi) who found that women candidates had a very negative experience of running for election and over 80% of those surveyed said that a critical mass of women in politics was imperative to overcome this.

As Northern Ireland is a very similar political system to the Republic of Ireland it can be presumed that similar constraints are faced by women here. There are however additional challenges for women in Northern Ireland as it is set to an adversarial style of politics arranged along communal and conflict lines which can be intimidating and off putting.

The financial strain of entering politics, a lack of resources and lack of fundraising capabilities can be a big factor in deciding to run for election for women.

Candidate selection can be difficult for women who face male dominated constituency and party organisations.

Northern Ireland political institutions and electoral functions impede women's participation as it still retains a very traditional male dominated political culture.

Northern Ireland currently has the lowest level of childcare provision in Britain. Political life often has inflexible, family unfriendly working hours and little or no access to affordable on-site childcare leads to a serious work/life imbalance.

The fact that few women are selected to run is borne out in research done by the Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics who in their Report Gender and the Northern Ireland Local Elections 2014 found that of the 906 candidates, 222 (24.5%) were women.

2. Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

We have previously referenced the work of US organisations such as the White House Project and EMILY's list which have helped elect thousands of women at local level and hundreds at national level through training. Other countries such as Vietnam, Ethiopia and Malawi have used training of female candidates as a key factor in increasing women's political representation. The 2012 project in the USA was an initiative that demonstrated positive outcomes by encouraging more women to pursue a career in politics. It was a nonpartisan

national campaign to identify and engage accomplished women to run for congress and state legislatures. The SDLP recognise the use of “Twinning” in constituencies in Wales and Scotland as a useful and successful way of increasing the amount of women being selected to run for election. Our southern counterparts in the Republic of Ireland have made use of gender quotas in respect of representation within Dáil éireann. The Republic has increased female political participation with legislation which introduced gender quotas for parliamentary candidate selection at future elections. Non-partisan not-for-profit organisation Women for Election, based in Dublin offer a tailored training and support programme to women seeking to enter public life; and provide and facilitate a cross-party network of political women, committed to equal representation of women and men in Irish politics. In the local elections in the Republic of Ireland in May 2014, 50% of those women elected had benefited from Women for Election training programmes.

The Making a Difference initiative empowered women at a local council level by developing local democracy capacity, while also encouraging personal development of candidates. It further encouraged a set of key principles and action plans to be protected by gender champions. Countries such as Argentina and Bolivia have developed women's networks with specialised woman's committees to tackle issues of inequality and participation.

3. A. What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

B. Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to Increase women in political life?

- A. The SDLP believe we should follow the example of our international and European counterparts in developing the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland.

Focusing on electing women at local elections can be facilitated by twinning constituencies. The twinning of constituencies has a proven track record and chooses one female and one male candidate in each pair of constituencies.

Party policies should seek to encourage women into entering political life. The provision and use of mentoring or shadowing schemes can assist such transitions. Youth groups or office placements can help raise young women's awareness of politics.

Parties need to develop rigorous gender policies and frameworks to facilitate the adoption of gender mainstreaming practices and equality impact assessments. Adoption of gender quota systems and all women candidate lists needs to be further assessed and developed in conjunction with positive discrimination to initially develop the amount of women running in local elections.

Political Parties should provide proper training to female candidate to improve their confidence and abilities when running for elections. Women should feel empowered by their candidacy and not subject to tokenism. Political parties should provide dedicated campaign funds to assist in candidates running.

Ultimately parties need to ensure that all initiatives designed to increase women's candidacies are widely known, extensively promoted and given strong positive support from leaders and supporters.

- B. The SDLP actively sought and targeted women to run for election in the 2014 local elections. Attention was particularly paid to areas where there were winnable seats. As a result 35% of the local election candidates were women and 40% of those elected for the SDLP are women.

The Parties Constitution encourages gender balance with Clause 19.8 directing each District Executive to take all practical steps to ensure a gender balance if there are two or more candidates.

The SDLP support the use of departmental Gender Action Plans in developing and deploying initiatives to increase women in political life.

The SDLP oppose pay discrimination based on gender as such disparity can discourage women from entering political life and is ethically wrong. We believe gender based pay gaps should be eliminated by mandatory pay audits.

Our MLA Dolores Kelly sits on the all-party group on UNSCR 1325: Women, Peace and Security which seeks to raise awareness of the lack of participation of women in political and public life in areas outlined in UNSCR 1325.

We have previously supported Council of Europe recommendations and believe that Northern Ireland should follow the example of its European counterparts in increasing the number of women in political life. The 2003 recommendations for example give a useful and comprehensive outline of supportive measures that are successful in increasing women's representation in politics. They included leadership training programs, women's political networks and a databank of potential women candidates to aid in election selection at all levels.

The SDLP support the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement and the creation of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland to protect all from inequality.

4. What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

We recognise the potential of gender quotas and believe quotas could be further used to address gender imbalance in regards ministerial, committee chairpersons and departmental spokesperson appointments

We do believe that in order to make a significant and lasting change to the assemblies own nature political parties must set down initiatives aimed at changing our views towards women at a political and societal level. Parties need to challenge negative gender stereotyping and promote positive shifts in culture through raising awareness of the challenges faced by women in politics and the positive contribution full equality will have on politics.

All women and especially young women can be encouraged from positive female role models in political life. It is therefore important the parties cultivate such role models to inspire participation in politics.

Parties should work in consultation with women's organisations to ensure that that woman's issues are being fully tackled and that qualified women are nominated to membership in public bodies and offices.

Robust mentoring and shadowing schemes can be used to encourage women to seek election to the assembly.

The Assembly should develop a substantial cross party network of political women with membership made exclusive to women to focus on political and cultural difficulties facing women.

The Assembly should develop member support systems in regards adequate child care provision, flexible working hours and skills training. Support systems are necessary to both female and male politicians.

5. What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

The SDLP believe that political parties need to show a significant commitment to ending gender discrimination and to enhancing the role of women already active in politics. As it

stands the SDLP is one of the few Northern Irish parties to have had a female leader in Margaret Ritchie. Margaret Ritchie also represents the party as an MP in Westminster. The current deputy leader of the SDLP is Dolores Kelly who further represents on the social development and policing committees and Karen McKevitt who represents the party on the Culture, Arts and Leisure committee.

All parties should seek to increase recognition at all levels of society the importance of gender-balanced representation in political and public decision making. They should further raise awareness of the inequalities and challenges faced by women in politics.

The SDLP believe all government departments must ensure that women and men issues and needs are reflected in departmental Gender Action Plans.

Gender pay gaps should be eliminated by mandatory pay audits.

Female politicians should be recognised as positive role models for all women within our society and parties should be encouraged to highlight them as such.

The Assembly needs to address barriers to active female politicians to allow them to continue to contribute positively to the political process. It needs to ensure structural support programmes in regards childcare, working hours and training continue to be developed.

Parties should continue to provide proper training and support programmes for women in order to enhance the skills and confidence of both newly elected and veteran politicians.

Political parties and the assembly need to develop successful women shadowing and mentoring initiatives in order to encourage young women into engaging with politics.

The Assembly needs to support the expansion of female political networks to other legislatures in Europe and internationally.

6. Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland

Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

The Assembly needs to fulfil its European and international obligations to end gender inequality by strengthening gender equality legislation and developing anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies. All European commission directives and United Nation declarations should be embedded into the Assembly's functions.

Gender Equality should be included within the Assemblies code of conduct and there should be zero tolerance of sexist comments/actions in the chamber or at committee meetings.

The SDLP support the use of departmental Gender Action Plans in developing and deploying initiatives to increase women in political life.

The Assembly needs a broad cross party committee on equality and Human rights which can tackle inequality issues such as enhancing of the roles of women in politics.

The Assembly needs to develop member support systems in regards adequate child care provision, flexible working hours and skills training. Support systems are necessary to both female and male politicians and as such the assembly should implement such family friendly policies.

To make a significant and lasting change to Northern Ireland political parties need to set down initiatives aimed at changing our cultural views on women at a political and societal level. As a parliamentary institution the assembly needs to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality throughout all parliamentary work.

The Assembly needs to remain vigilant in order to enhance the role of women in politics. It needs to continue to develop its own research and data collection on the scale of gender inequalities within Northern Ireland both on cultural and political levels.

- 7. Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.**

Sinn Féin

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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Section 6: Contact Details

Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Sinn Féin	Telephone Number:		
Stakeholder Address Ard Oifig 44 Parnell Square Dublin 1	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party	X	Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

Sinn Féin / political party in Ireland.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above**. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 **Statistical Outline**

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 **Policy**

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

1 http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

There are many barriers facing women entering politics in Ireland including the five C's. Cash, confidence, Culture, Childcare, Candidate Selection. Women are under represented at local councils in public appointments, at senior levels of the Civil Service, in the Judiciary, in the media. This has led to the creation of a culture that is very adversarial for many women especially women who strive for equality. In Stormont there are no women directors in the senior management group.

At times the culture of the Assembly is very hostile to women and slow to deal with the sexism and misogyny that women politicians have to endure on a regular basis. On many occasions the authority of women in positions of power is challenged and undermines women in senior political roles. (one of the most recent examples was Gregory Campbell's, MP MLA intervention during question time when Minister Ní Chuilín was answering questions) The sad thing about this was the failure of any of his colleagues to speak out publicly following these comments.)

On another occasion a woman MLA was reduced to tears in the chamber during a debate by bullying behaviour of some male MLA's. This bullying behaviour leads many women (young and old) to say politics is not for them. It is too adversarial, too personal when it comes to women.

Candidate selection is one of the areas that mitigates against women entering politics. It is seen as jobs for the boys and if women are not part of the networks it is difficult to get a foot in. Lack of quotas, or financial penalties for failing to elect a certain percentage of women lets the system off the hook time and again.

An analysis of media shows that on a consistent basis women do not get fair share of coverage and this has an adverse impact on opportunities in a very competitive electoral arena.

Girls also need to have strong female role models, the messages sent to girls early by the rows of men in suits, generally older men is that politics is for older men and not for women.

The under representation of women on Boards and other areas of public life also affects the number of women in politics.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Sinn Féin take a very proactive approach to Women in Politics. Sinn Féin Ard Chomhairle is elected on a list system, whereby there are two lists a women's list and men's list. This ensures 50% women elected from the floor of the Ard Fheis.

- Sinn Féin's vice president is a woman
- 3 out of 4 of Sinn Féin's MEP's are women
- 9 out of 29 MLA's are women
- 1 out of 5 MP's are women
- 2 out of 14 TD's are women
- 1 out of 3 Senators is a woman
- 3 out of 5 Ministers are women
- Chief Whip in the North is a woman.
- Ard Rúnaí is a woman.

Sinn Féin take a proactive approach to promoting women into positions of leadership and supporting them in those public positions.

Sinn Féin is leading in terms of political parties but it has a way to go and the women in Sinn Féin and many of the men want to see continuous improvement in relation to representation of women at all levels of the party.

Sinn Féin support Quotas (mandatory, Voluntary)

Sinn Féin support zipping, twinning.

Sinn Féin proactively approach and encourage women to stand in local council, MLA, TD, MEP and for party positions.

Sinn Féin support a cross party caucus

Sinn Féin takes a very strong stand in challenging sexism and misogyny whether it is internal to the party or externally.

Sinn Féin supports quotas for women on public boards.

Sinn Féin supports women in press.

Sinn Féin support equality legislation (which includes gender)

Sinn Féin supports financial penalties

Sinn Féin supports family friendly hours and would be open to looking at job sharing for elected representatives.

Sinn Féin believe there should be a zero tolerance approach to sexism in public life.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

Quotas

Twinning / Zipping

Financial penalties

Putting women candidates in winnable seats

Appointing women to senior positions internally and within the Assembly/ Executive, Leinster House, European parliament, Councils.

Support women who are in senior positions.

Tackle gender inequality at all levels within the party

Tackle head on sexism and misogyny

Build strong role models for younger men and women coming forward.

Gender budgeting.

Education around gender equality for male and female party activists and elected representatives.

Sinn Féin believe that we need to listen to women politicians and activists and see what they identify as obstacles and difficulties.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

An abridged version of the Green Party's new policy is attached as a separate document.

The political rationale for the Strategy is that **increasing women's involvement is ultimately about challenging ingrained power structures, networks and relationships which privilege men.**

Sinn Féin has a Proactive approach to putting women into winnable seats.

Sinn Féin has a proactive approach to putting women into senior positions internally and in public life.

See above for the positions that are held by women in Sinn Féin.

Sinn Féin support the list for men and list for women for election to the Ard Chomhairle

Sinn Féin provide specific training for women candidates and elected representatives.

Sinn Féin supports legislation that imposes financial penalties against parties that do not have a percentage of women as candidates.

Sinn Féin uses the offices to encourage and promote more women into public life.

Sinn Féin has proposed that the Assembly Commission carry out a Gender Action Plan.

Sinn Féin proposed that the AERC carrying out an inquiry into Women in Politics in the Assembly in the North.

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Quotas

Zippering / twinning

Financial penalties for parties who do not select specified percentages of women.

Promoting women to public office

Cross party Caucus

Open to examining job sharing

Gender equality strategy

Raising the issue of gender equality in committees

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

Active support from their party to carry out their duties

Listen to their concerns in their role and see what support is needed.

Promote them in the media and show a positive role model to younger and older women and men.

Promote them as Ministers, Chairs of Committees and other offices.

Ensure Women get to speak in debates and other duties of the Assembly.

Ensure women do interviews and major public events.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

Need to ensure that there is gender equality amongst staff in the assembly at every level.

Promote the women who are in the Assembly.

Speaker could play a role in promoting gender equality (if we had a Speaker)

Inquiry that AERC is carrying out is very important in this regard.

Continuous challenging of sexism.

Monitoring employment of women

Gender equality training for all MLA's in order to enable them to carry out their functions at committee level.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

Sinn Féin welcome the AERC initiative. Sinn Féin welcome the proactive approach taken, and confirm that we will play our role to do everything within our power to ensure that our institutions are equal in terms of gender – Houses of the Oireachtais, Assembly, North South Ministerial Council, British Irish Council, North South Interparliamentary Association, British Irish Association and Constitutional Convention.

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Ulster Unionist Party

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Ulster Unionist Party	Telephone Number: 028 9047 7630		
Stakeholder Address Strandtown Hall 2-4 Belmont Road BT4 2AN	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party	X	Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

(This box will expand as you type)

The Ulster Unionist Party is one of the oldest political parties within the United Kingdom. The historical ruling body, the Ulster Unionist Council recognised the importance of the role of women since its early days. The Ulster Women's Unionist Council was established in 1911 to encourage women to development and contribute politically and to ensure representation of women at the highest levels within the party.

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These include:

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The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is ‘representation in public life/decision-making’, which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

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Further information on barriers to women’s participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

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Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

(This box will expand as you type)

The Ulster Unionist Party has recognised the under representation of Ulster Unionist women within elected bodies and has been actively supporting female members to increase their representation and encouraging more to put themselves forward for selection and election.

The Ulster Unionist Party values all its members, male and female. We are committed to delivering inclusive and balanced representation for the people of Northern Ireland and we want to offer candidates who – female or male – can best represent and best serve their constituents.

Key challenges in increasing female representation. include increasing the confidence and fine tuning the skill sets of potential candidates.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

(This box will expand as you type)

Sandra Overend MLA in her role as the Party Officer with responsibility for Women's Development launched the Dame Dehra Parker Programme in 2009. It was designed to encourage more Ulster Unionist women to play a greater role in political activism and to become elected representatives.

The Dame Dehra Parker Programme has successfully developed the skills and increased the confidence of female members. Whilst there has been a number of participants who have been successfully elected to local government and to the NI Assembly, we recognise that further work needs to be done and are committed to building on the good work that has already been done.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

(This box will expand as you type)

This is a decision for individual political parties.

Ulster Unionists believe in supporting and encouraging female activists. Tailored female support programmes are important to increase the skills and confidence of women considering standing for election.

Further empowering female elected representatives with positions of responsibility can boost electoral performance and encourage other women to step forward.

For example, after just 2 years as a Councillor on Larne Borough Council, Cllr Maureen Morrow was put forward by her Ulster Unionist colleagues as Mayor. She was highly successful during her Mayoral year in which she was recognised by all as playing an exemplar role as Mayor. It came as no surprise when she significantly increased her personal support and UUP support in the recent local government elections.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

(This box will expand as you type)

Ulster Unionists believe in supporting and encouraging female activists.

In addition to the Dame Dehra Parker programme which we outlined earlier, we continue to highlight successful women role models from the world of business and community at our annual conferences to encourage more women to step forward and play a full role in the Party and elected politics.

Tailored female support and training programmes are important to increase skills and confidence of women considering standing for election.

Empowering women with positions of responsibility can boost electoral performance and encourage other women to step forward.

4. Question

What ‘positive actions’ would you recommend to increase women’s representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

(This box will expand as you type)

We would recommend the provision of Training and support programmes to encourage and increase the skills and confidence of prospective female candidates. The progress of Jo-Anne Dobson’s Organ Donation Bill to date has shown that a first term female MLA, supported by colleagues, motivated by personal experience and working closely with a range of charities can be a very effective political force and an inspiration to other women to get involved with the party and seek selection.

We also believe that NILGA could play a key role of encouraging more capable women councillors to consider standing for election to the NI Assembly.

We also value the role played by privately funded training programmes such as Politics Plus in encouraging female political volunteers and activists to step forward and play their part in elected politics.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

(This box will expand as you type)

The Media should be encouraged to highlight positive female role models

The provision of training and support programmes to enhance skills and confidence

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

(This box will expand as you type)

We would suggest that the Assembly’s authorities utilise Assembly Research and Politics Plus to engage with women and undertake research to discover why they are not coming forward in sufficient numbers and what game-changing initiatives could be brought forward as a result.

In short, begin by listening to the stakeholders.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

It is extremely important that the Assembly better reflects the society it represents. Women make up approximately 51% of the population and it is clear that all political parties have work to do to increase the number of women being selected and elected.

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Other Key Stakeholders

Belfast Feminist Network

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Belfast Feminist Network	Telephone Number: 07710939829		
Stakeholder Address 1 Manse Drive, Carryduff, Belfast BT8 8RU	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		
	Grassroots activist organisation		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

Belfast Feminist Network began organising in 2010 following a series of discussion groups that revealed a growing desire for a space for open feminist community and opportunities for activism. Since that time the group has grown in number to encompass over 1400 online

members and a dynamic and fluid group of event organisers and attendees, activists, protestors, marchers, workshop participants, debaters, creators, performers, crafters, and people who want to meet together to challenge sexism and to change outcomes for women.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above. This will include evidence from Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

¹ http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to ‘*the right of women to full and equal political participation*’.

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is ‘representation in public life/decision-making’, which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women’s participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

The key challenges/barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland are demonstrable at different stages.

Lack of gender awareness

In the political arena there is a failure to acknowledge the structural gender inequality which impacts upon a woman’s choice to enter politics and the outcomes for her if she does choose a political career. In order for women to advance in politics, the Executive, the Assembly and the political parties must understand the ways in which women face discrimination because of their gender. The discussion around women’s lack of confidence acting as an impediment to entering politics must be understood as a consequence of structural inequality and not because women lack the relevant competence or skill set.

Selection of candidates

This gender blindness is evidenced in how the five main political parties select candidates. This is the most pronounced barrier to women's political participation in Northern Ireland (NI) given the well-established link between candidate selection and representation, and the 'unrivalled control political parties have over legislative recruitment' (Matthews, 2012). In the Assembly Research and Information Service Paper 'Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly', Potter stated that the representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. Following an examination of the 2011 Assembly elections, Potter stated that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

The candidate selection process is considered gender-neutral, however, we argue that candidacy requirements and the decentralised nature of selection acts as barriers to women candidates being selected. The under-representation of women in the NI Assembly, as a result of the failure to take affirmative action to counter the gender imbalance prevents the next generation from having political female role models to aspire to. It is worth noting that out of the five main parties in the Assembly, Sinn Féin is the only party that takes affirmative action to address the gender balance.

The political environment

The political environment of the NI Assembly, mainly the adversarial nature of politics, acts as a barrier preventing women from choosing a career in politics. Research by Rosenthal (2001) suggests that women's conflict resolution styles embody democratic ideals and that women tend to work in a less hierarchical, more participatory and in a more collaborative manner than their male counterparts. Furthermore, women are routinely undermined by the behaviour and comments of male politicians which, when combined with the combative nature in which debates are carried out and views are expressed, can deter women from entering politics. The Assembly Code of Conduct is in place to prevent such occurrences and should be more stringently implemented, with the real threat of serious penalties if not adhered to, and a culture created that is supportive of women with grievances reporting them.

Childcare facilities

The lack of childcare facilities in Parliament Buildings and the late Assembly debates can also deter women from entering politics given that the vast majority of single parents in NI are women, and women are much more likely to have more childcare responsibilities than their male counterparts.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

The initiatives that have demonstrated positive outcomes elsewhere have included positive gender discrimination in each of the political parties' selection process; a mandatory gender balance on Assembly committees; childcare facilities and 9-5 parliamentary hours; community leadership training for women; a mentoring scheme for aspiring candidates and newly elected female political representatives; and gender and diversity training for all MLAs.

Selection of candidates

We believe that women's political participation must be made a priority among all parties in Northern Ireland, and demonstrated through affirmative action to address gender imbalance in their candidate selection process. Following an examination of the 2011 Assembly elections, Potter stated that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of

lower numbers of candidates. We believe this is the most pronounced barrier to women's political participation in Northern Ireland (NI) given the well-established link between candidate selection and representation, and the 'unrivalled control political parties have over legislative recruitment' (Matthews, 2012).

The candidate selection process is considered gender-neutral, however, we argue that candidacy requirements and the decentralised nature of selection acts as barriers to women candidates being selected. The under-representation of women in the NI Assembly, as a result of the failure to take affirmative action to counter the gender imbalance prevents the next generation from having political female role models to aspire to

There should be a gender balance on the Executive Committees of each party, there should be gender awareness training made mandatory for all positions of power within the party, and selection processes of candidates should be held to the same scrutiny as public appointments. We recommend that there is external verification that parties have adhered to their selection process in order to ensure it is fit for purpose and does not act as a barrier for women seeking a career in politics.

Sinn Féin is the only party of the five executive parties in the Assembly that actively positively discriminates on the grounds of gender. Although the party could arguably come under criticism for the extent of involvement of the central party in candidate selection, it is at this point where Sinn Féin adopts the most strident approach often rejecting selection lists if they do not include female candidates. Sinn Féin also implement quotas in internal party positions which includes gender equality provisos for every internal election and an imposed 50–50 gender balance on its National Executive. Such measures ensure that the barriers that exist for women aspiring to a career in politics are positively countered.

Mandatory gender balance in committee chairs

A mandatory gender balance in committee chairperson and deputy chairperson roles should be considered by the Assembly. In Rwanda, men and women play a leadership role in all parliamentary committees. If the chair is female, her deputy is male and vice versa. This structure is designed, in part, to ensure women have the opportunity to contribute their lived experiences to committee considerations. (Markham, 2014)

Childcare facilities

Introducing childcare facilities at Stormont could encourage more women to pursue a career in politics. Research cited in Markham's report 'Strengthening Women's Roles in Parliaments' stated that when women entered South Africa's first post-apartheid parliament, they initially experienced difficulty balancing family and political duties. Women fought to eliminate evening and night-time parliamentary sessions, which conflicted with family responsibilities. They also instituted childcare services in the parliamentary building which eventually was used by both men and women for their families. This could also serve to encourage younger people of both genders into politics in Northern Ireland.

Leadership training and development

In a recent forum the Belfast Feminist Network held on women's political participation in Northern Ireland, Isobel Loughran of the Women's Resource and Development Agency stated that she was 'shocked' by her experience of providing community leadership training for women. Ms Loughran stated that women were so far removed from considering community and political leadership. Therefore to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics, the NI Assembly should participate in leadership development programmes from the community level and upwards to encourage women into community leadership positions and local councils, and consequently ensure there is a supply of women from all sectors of society represented in the NI Assembly.

The 'Women in Public Life' development scheme introduced in the National Assembly of Wales to increase female political participation ahead of 2016 elections, provides training and development for 10-12 women with a view to participation in public life. This, or a similar scheme should be considered by the Northern Ireland Assembly. It must be noted that this was initiated by the Welsh Assembly where women already make up forty percent of elected members.

Mentoring

As cited in Markham, women interested in pursuing a career in politics could also gain from mentoring and networking with women who have previously served in elected office. Such connections provide quick access to rules and procedures, especially informal norms that enable effective legislating and invaluable support to new MLAs or potential MLAs entering the institution. Mentoring could serve to make a career in politics more accessible for aspiring female politicians and an easier transition for newly elected members.

Importance of descriptive representation

There is a distinction between women's issues and women's perspectives. Women's issues are those that mainly affect women. Women's perspectives are women contributing their perspectives on all policy. Gender and diversity training for both male and female members, and a strict enforcement of the code of conduct in parliamentary proceedings could both serve to encourage more women to enter a career in politics which would lead to women's perspectives being shared on all policy. As cited in Markham (2014), continuous training on gender analysis could positively influence the political focus on women's issues from both male and female members and on the impact that policy and legislation will have on women. This could also serve to improve the confidence that women have in the political process thereby encouraging them to actively participate within it.

3a

Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

All political parties in Northern Ireland should prioritise the political participation of women. Evidence cited Q2 points out that when women are included in the political process, countries experience higher standards of living, and positive developments are evidence in education, infrastructure and health. These are objectives that every political party in Northern Ireland, regardless of ideology, are working towards.

Candidate selection

We believe that affirmative action taken to address the gender imbalance of the political institutions in Northern Ireland should be introduced when selecting candidates for election and in recruiting for the internal power structures of the party. There should be a gender balance on the Executive Committees of each party, there should be gender awareness training made mandatory for all positions of power within the party, and selection processes of candidates should be held to the same scrutiny as public appointments. We recommend that there is external verification that parties have adhered to their selection process in order to ensure it is fit for purpose and does not act as a barrier for women seeking a career in politics.

Sinn Féin is the only party of the five executive parties in the Assembly that actively positively discriminates on the grounds of gender. Although the party could arguably come under criticism for the extent of involvement of the central party in candidate selection, it is at this point where Sinn Féin adopts the most strident approach often rejecting selection lists if they do not include female candidates. Sinn Féin also implement quotas in internal party positions which includes gender equality provisos for every internal election and an imposed 50-50 gender balance on its National Executive. Such measures ensure that the barriers that exist for women aspiring to a career in politics are positively countered.

Mentoring

As mentioned in Q2, political parties in Northern Ireland could promote a mentoring scheme for aspiring female politicians and newly elected members to be mentored by serving female Councillors, MLAs and MPs. This could serve to make a career in politics more accessible for an aspiring politician, and an easier transition for newly elected members.

Appointment of internal staff

Political parties should ensure that there is a gender balance in the appointment of political advisors, parliamentary assistants and office staff. These roles are often seen as ‘pipeline’ roles from which people go on to stand for election.

Media representation

Political parties must also be challenged about who they put forward to speak to the media. There is a noticeable gender imbalance in local TV and radio political broadcasting, and it is the responsibility of the parties to select who goes on. Without visible role models, women aren’t able to visualise themselves in these roles.

Positive discrimination

It is important to recognise the ‘merit’ argument when discussing positive gender discrimination in the selection of candidates. Positive discrimination could be implemented in a number of different ways, including through ‘strong preferential selection’ in which preference must be given to the woman even if she is (or appears to be) the weaker candidate, or through ‘weak preferential selection’ in which a woman is selected only if her qualifications are equal to those of the strongest male candidate. However, it is important to note the crucial difference between appointment to the boards of public companies and political institutions.

The Belfast Feminist Network recognises that women are not a homogenous group. Depending on what age women are, their level of education, whether they are from a rural or urban setting, they have been exposed to very different life experiences that has led to different objective or needs. Political representation by definition should represent the people they serve. Women make up fifty one percent of the NI population and make up twenty one percent of the NI Assembly. Therefore, The Belfast Feminist Network believes that political parties should implement strategies that aim for descriptive representation so that all women, regardless of background, have the opportunity for a career in politics.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

N/A

4. Question

What ‘positive actions’ would you recommend to increase women’s representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

There is evidence of many positive outcomes when women are participating in the political process. According to Beaman et al (2007), when women are empowered as political leaders, countries experience higher standards of living, and positive developments are evidenced in education, infrastructure and health. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that women’s political participation leads to increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines (Rosenthal, 2001) and more sustainable peacebuilding (Chinkin, 2003).

Selection of candidates

We believe that women's political participation must be made a priority among all parties in Northern Ireland, and demonstrated through affirmative action to address gender imbalance in their candidate selection process. Following an examination of the 2011 Assembly elections, Potter stated that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates. We believe this is the most pronounced barrier to women's political participation in Northern Ireland (NI) given the well-established link between candidate selection and representation, and the 'unrivalled control political parties have over legislative recruitment' (Matthews, 2012).

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There should be a gender balance on the Executive Committees of each party, there should be gender awareness training made mandatory for all positions of power within the party, and selection processes of candidates should be held to the same scrutiny as public appointments. We recommend that there is external verification that parties have adhered to their selection process in order to ensure it is fit for purpose and does not act as a barrier for women seeking a career in politics.

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Childcare facilities

Introducing childcare facilities at Stormont could encourage more women to pursue a career in politics. Research cited in Markham's report 'Strengthening Women's Roles in Parliaments' stated that when women entered South Africa's first post-apartheid parliament, they initially experienced difficulty balancing family and political duties. Women fought to eliminate evening and night-time parliamentary sessions, which conflicted with family responsibilities. They also instituted childcare services in the parliamentary building which eventually was used by both men and women for their families. This could also serve to encourage younger people of both genders into politics in Northern Ireland.

Leadership training and development

In a recent forum the Belfast Feminist Network held on women's political participation in Northern Ireland, a contributor involved in leadership training at community level stated

that she was ‘shocked’ by her experience of providing community leadership training for women. She stated that women were so far removed from considering community and political leadership. Therefore to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics, the NI Assembly should participate in leadership development programmes from the community level and upwards to encourage women into community leadership positions and local councils, and consequently ensure there is a supply of women from all sectors of society represented in the NI Assembly.

The ‘Women in Public Life’ development scheme introduced in the National Assembly of Wales to increase female political participation ahead of 2016 elections, provides training and development for 10-12 women with a view to participation in public life. This, or a similar scheme should be considered by the Northern Ireland Assembly. It must be noted that this was initiated by the Welsh Assembly where women already make up forty percent of elected members.

Mentoring

As cited in Markham, women interested in pursuing a career in politics could also gain from mentoring and networking with women who have previously served in elected office. Such connections provide quick access to rules and procedures, especially informal norms that enable effective legislating and invaluable support to new MLAs or potential MLAs entering the institution. Mentoring could serve to make a career in politics more accessible for aspiring female politicians and an easier transition for newly elected members.

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Political parties should ensure that there is a gender balance in the appointment of political advisors, parliamentary assistants and office staff. These roles are often seen as ‘pipeline’ roles from which people go on to stand for election.

Media representation

Political parties must also be challenged about who they put forward to speak to the media. There is a noticeable gender imbalance in local TV and radio political broadcasting, and it is the responsibility of the parties to select who goes on. Without visible role models, women aren’t able to visualise themselves in these roles.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

We believe that political parties have an important role to play in enhancing the role of women already active in the political arena in NI. It is regularly evident that the representation of women politicians in the media is extremely poor. Broadcasters, online and print media should implement strategies towards equal representation of women when seeking out political opinion and input. The media should also be taken to task for unfair or stereotypical coverage of women in the political arena such as commentary that focuses on their clothes or appearance. The government is required to tackle this under their international obligations to end discrimination against women as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Article 5. TV and radio shows that focus on political discussion often seek out gender representation but find that political parties will more often send men as representatives. It is extremely important to challenge this kind of political gatekeeping as women need to see political women as role models. The visibility of women already active in the political arena is vitally important to encouraging further participation from women.

It is also important that the roles available in the Assembly such as Committee Chairs or Deputy Chairs are allocated with gender equality as key criteria. Committees are vital to the accountability mechanism which ensures the effectiveness of our Legislative Assembly and it is only right that men and women should be afforded equal representation in these roles. It is also important that women are equally represented in key political negotiations. For example, we observed with dismay that the Cardiff talks organised by the PSNI in May 2013 included only 3 women in a delegation of 30 people. An appropriate response to this from the PSNI would have been to communicate to all the invited political parties and community organisations that they must have women within their delegates.

The Northern Ireland Assembly also has key responsibilities for enhancing the role of women who are already politically active by addressing the barriers these women face on a day-to-day basis. These include childcare, working hours, and a pervasive culture of sexism.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

We recommend that the NI Assembly should address barriers relating to the gendered nature of caring roles that are currently carried out mainly by women. 89% of people who are caring for family members and not in the workplace are women. The majority of this caring work is childcare. In the ongoing absence of a childcare strategy for Northern Ireland the NI Assembly needs to recognise that this issue is currently preventing women, particularly those in a certain age group, from becoming involved in politics. We recommend the establishment of an accessible, affordable childcare facility at Stormont.

It is also necessary to address the expectations placed on both staff and MLAs regarding working hours and the incompatibility with family responsibilities. We believe that the current demands not only prevent women's participation due to the gendered nature of family life, but also perpetuate this division further as men in the political arena are prevented from having meaningful time to invest in their own family roles. We wish to see an approach to political work that recognises the importance of caring work and social reproduction. Policies should be enforced to ensure that MLAs and staff are able to avail of flexible working and family-friendly working practices.

We would like to see further improvement regarding the undercurrent of sexism in the culture of the NI Assembly and its associated bodies. While much attention has been paid in recent years to training and capacity building for women in the political arena, there has been a noticeable absence of training for men in gender awareness that would allow an increased understanding of the impact of male behaviour and the entrenched nature of institutionalised sexism. Many women who have engaged with the NI Assembly and its Committees have experienced dismissive language, undermining comments, MLAs talking and laughing when they start to speak, verbal bullying and a range of other culturally oppressive experiences. We would like to see a two-fold approach to tackling this. The mechanisms already in place such as the code of conduct should be strongly enforced when it comes to complaints of a sexist nature. Secondly, the NI Assembly should engage in an awareness-raising and capacity building campaign on the subject of sexism so as to tackle the behaviour of those who perpetrate it while at the same time creating a culture that ensure all women in Stormont feel they can report such incidents in confidence and that these will be dealt with through the correct procedures.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

Below are the reports that we have referenced in the document

Beaman, L., Duflo, E., Pande, R. and Topalova, P. (2007) 'Women Politicians, Gender Bias, and Policy-making in Rural India', Background Paper for UNICEF's The State of the World's Children Report, 2007, 11.15-16

Chinkhin, C. (2003) 'Peace Agreements as a Means for Promoting Gender Equality and Ensuring the Participation of Women', United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women.

Markham, S (2012) Strengthening Women's Roles in Parliaments, Parliamentary Affairs online

Matthews, N. (2012) Gendered candidate selection and the representation of women in Northern Ireland, Parliamentary Affairs online

Rosenthal, C. S. (2001) 'Gender Styles in Legislative Committees', Women & Politics, 21, 21–46

Potter, M (2013) Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly available at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2013/ofmdfm/10813.pdf>

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Claire McGing

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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- Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

Section 3: Background

- Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Section 4: Questions to consider

Section 5: Additional Information

Section 6: Contact Details

Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Claire McGing (claire.f.mcging@gmail.com)	Telephone Number: +353 86 334 2812		
Stakeholder Address Home address (Preferred): Woodtown Kilmore Kilcock County Meath Republic of Ireland Institutional address: Department of Geography Maynooth University Maynooth County Kildare Republic of Ireland	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic	X	Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

(This box will expand as you type)

I teach political/electoral geography in the Department of Geography at Maynooth University, County Kildare, and have particular expertise in women's political representation across the island of Ireland. My work is mainly concerned with institutional and cultural barriers to gender equality in political life, including the role of candidate selection, political party cultures, and the PR-STV electoral system.

My research has been published in prestigious journals such as *Political Geography*, the *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy* and *Irish Political Studies*, and I have also contributed to a number of edited collections. South of the border, I often discuss Irish politics and gender politics in the national media and my research has informed policy-making on legislative gender quotas for Dáil elections. In January 2012 I was invited by the Department of Justice and Equality and Minister of State Kathleen Lynch to address a government conference in Dublin Castle on how to elect more women, sharing a platform with the Taoiseach, Tánaiste and various other political leaders and representatives.

Below is a full list of my research publications to date:-

- McGing, C. (Forthcoming) 'Women's roles in Irish political parties: continuity and change', in: *Irish Feminisms: Past, Present and Future* (Arlen House/Syracuse University Press).
- Buckley, F., Mariani, M., **McGing, C.** and White, T. (Forthcoming) Pathways to Dáil Éireann: Are male and female candidates similarly well-situated to win election?, *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*.
- Buckley, F., Mariani, M., **McGing, C.** and White, T. (Forthcoming) 'Women's political representation in Ireland: From the marginalisation to gender quotas', in: *Towards 2016: Old and New Irelands* (European Federation of Associations and Centres of Irish Studies).
- Buckley, F., Mariani, M., **McGing, C.** and White, T. (Forthcoming) 'Gender and electoral success in Ireland', in: *Gendering Ireland, c. 1880-2012* (Cambridge Scholars Press).
- McGing, C. (2014) Guest editorial: Towards a feminist electoral geography, *Political Geography*.
- McGing, C. (2014) Report: The 2012 Children's Referendum, *Irish Political Studies* (advanced online access).
- McGing, C. (2014) 'The single transferable vote and women's representation in Ireland', in: *Politics and Gender in Ireland: The Quest for Political Agency* (Routledge).
- McGing, C. (2013) The single transferable vote and women's representation in Ireland, *Irish Political Studies*, 28 (3), pp. 322-340.
- **McGing, C.** and White, T. (2012) Gender and electoral representation in Ireland, *Études Irlandaises*, 37 (2), pp. 33-48.
- Buckley, F. and **McGing, C.** (2011) 'Women and the election', in: *How Ireland Voted 2011* (Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 222-239.

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Powers

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- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
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Assembly and Executive Review Committee’s Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

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 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of ‘positive actions’ that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above**. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public ‘Call for Evidence’ and from visits to other legislatures**.

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The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 **Statistical Outline**

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 **Policy**

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

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The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is ‘representation in public life/decision-making’, which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women’s participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Party selection processes, particularly if undertaken at a local constituency level, pose particular difficulties for women wishing to enter politics. Research by Neil Matthews (QUB) shows that selectorates for Legislative Assembly elections usually expect potential candidates to have some level of political experience, whether it is a history of service in local government and/or a strong record of party activism. Very rarely will a candidate for Stormont come from nowhere – most have undertaken some form of political ‘apprenticeship’ beforehand, as is the case in many other jurisdictions including the Republic of Ireland. The electorate also respond better to candidates with names and faces they recognise. As a result, aspirants require resources like time, funds and networks to launch a successful selection bid. Given the persistent sexual division of labour in Northern Irish society, where women remain less likely to participate in work outside of the home (at least on a full-time basis) and are still the main carers of children and/or elderly parents, they possess less of these resources in the first place.

International research also suggests that women party members have less confidence than men in seeking a nomination to run and that, where candidates are selected using

One Member One Vote rules, perceive themselves (whether rightly or wrongly) to have less grassroots support.

My own research concludes that incumbency also poses a barrier to full gender representation – where there is little parliamentary turnover, there is less ‘room’ for political parties to place new women on the ballot paper or, if they do, for them to win a seat. For example, over 90% of incumbents that ran in the 2011 assembly election were returned to office. Furthermore, the vast majority of incumbents are male, further perpetuating the cycle of gender inequality. Term limits could be considered.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Dedicated training programmes for aspiring women politician have proven beneficial in many countries. These types of initiatives allow women to develop the confidence to run, as well as educate them on campaigning techniques, media performance, fundraising, and networking-building. Women for Election, for example, offers tailored training to women in the Republic of Ireland seeking to enter political life. Most political parties have funded a number of their women members to participate in these workshops, which have also included non-party women from all walks of life, opening up the traditional routes of candidate recruitment for parties. The group also facilitates an informal network of political women. Their success was demonstrated in the recent local elections in May 2014, when half of all women elected to local government had been through one of their programmes. For further information about Women for Election, see: <http://www.womenforelection.ie/about-us/>.

A similar initiative would likely prove beneficial in Northern Ireland. As a start, Women Into Politics, a cross-community NGO based in the Shankhill Women’s Centre in Belfast, could be better funded and equipped to run similar workshops and events at a small scale.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

No party in Northern Ireland has of yet taken advantage of the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002, allowing for British parties to draw up all-women candidate shortlists (AWS) for elections. AWS address the pre-selection level: only women can contest for party nominated in designated constituencies, usually ‘open’ ones or where an incumbent is retiring. The success of such measures can be seen in the UK’s Labour Party which elected one-third women MPs to Westminster in the 2010 general election. This was significantly higher than the Conservatives (16%) and Liberal Democrats (13%), neither of which applies AWS. Northern Irish parties could adopt similar methods, alongside additional supports for women members and candidates such as training programmes, mentoring schemes, and ring-fenced campaign funding. Particular emphasis should be placed on putting women forward for local elections as this would create a ‘pipeline’ of experienced women to run for higher-level offices like the Assembly.

If they don’t already, parties could employ a dedicated women’s officer based in party headquarters to overview gender equality strategies/policy and to provide formal and informal support to female candidates. Beyond electoral politics parties should also strive towards full equality in internal decision-making spheres such as national executives and influential constituency positions, as well as their youth wings.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

Not applicable.

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

- The use of all-women shortlists (discussed above), particularly by the largest political parties.
- Though likely controversial, mandatory gender quotas, similar to that recently introduced for elections to Dáil Éireann, should be considered. Parties would be legally obliged to run a certain proportion of women candidates and a certain proportion of men candidates or else face sanctions. In the Republic, non-compliance means by parties means a cut of one-half of their annual state funding. For further details about the legislation, see research undertaken by Professor Yvonne Galligan (QUB), Fiona Buckley (UCC) and I: http://www.academia.edu/4339586/Legislatting_for_Gender_Quotas_in_Ireland.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

While particularly difficult in an ethno-nationalist political environment like Northern Ireland, a cross-party women's group could be formed at Stormont to allow women MLAs of different parties to discuss their shared gendered experiences, to form friendships and networks for informal support, to encourage other women into public life through conferences/workshops, and to lobby for the increased attention to women's issues and perspectives in decision-making. Groups like this in other parliaments act to target the informal 'old boys network' already entrenched in parliamentary politics.

At a party level all leaders should better promote women's promotion to influential Stormont positions such as ministries, committee chairpersons and party spokespersons, as well as encourage them to undertake more media work for exposure.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

(This box will expand as you type)

- Zero tolerance of sexist comments/actions in the chamber and committee settings, with those who do reprimanded.
- Employ the use of teleconferencing for MLAs with young children if they have no other reason to be at parliament that day, particularly new mothers.
- Promote family-friendly working hours for MLAs (and civil servants). Ensure all meetings end as scheduled. Importantly, make sure representatives are well equipped to deal with large caseloads from their constituents.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

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All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Dr. Paul Chaney

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Dr Paul Chaney	Telephone Number: 07443424599		
Stakeholder Address	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic	X	Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

Paul Chaney is a Reader in Public Policy at Cardiff University School of Social Sciences. His research interests include: gender and politics, equalities, public policy, territorial politics, governance, representation and, human rights. He has written over fifty papers in leading academic journals and his books include: *Women, Politics and Constitutional Change* (2007, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, ISBN: 0708318959, co-authored), *Equality and Public Policy* (2011, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, ISBN-10: 070832326X, ISBN-13: 978-0708323267). He was a member of the UK government Steering Group that established the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Books

Chaney, P. (2011) **Equality and Public Policy**, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, ISBN-10: 070832326X, ISBN-13: 978-0708323267, pp345

Chaney P. (co-authored) (2007) **Women, Politics and Constitutional Change**, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, ISBN: 0708318959. pp.253.

Chaney, P. (co-authored) (2001) **New Governance- New Democracy?** University of Wales Press, Cardiff (2001) pp 250, ISBN 0-7083-1678-6

Peer Reviewed Journal Papers:

Chaney, P. (2014) The Substantive Representation of Women - Does Issue Salience Matter? Party Politicization and UK Westminster Elections 1945- 2010, **British Journal of Politics and International Relations**, 16, 96- 116, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-856X>

Chaney, P. (2014) Electoral Politics and the Party Politicization of Human Rights: The Case of Westminster Elections 1945- 2010, **Parliamentary Affairs - A Journal of Representative Politics**, 67, 1, 209- 231, Oxford University Press/ Hansard Society, <http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/content/current>

Chaney, P. (2014) Institutional Ableism, Critical Actors and the Substantive Representation of Disabled People: Evidence from the UK Parliament 1940-2012. **Journal of Legislative Studies**, Impact 0.976, <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/fjls20/current#.U4xm0ih2Goo>

Chaney, P. (2014) Manifesto Discourse and the Substantive Representation of Ethnic Minorities: Analysis of UK State-Wide and Meso Elections, 1964-2011, **Parliamentary Affairs: A Journal of Representative Politics** (Oxford University Press/ Hansard Society) (Early View <http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/07/03/pa.gst010.abstract>) [Journal Ranking: 22/92 in Social Sciences, 5-Year Impact Factor: 1.616]

Chaney, P. (2013) 'Older People, Equality and Territorial Justice: Devolution and Social Policy in the UK', **Critical Social Policy**, vol. 33, no. 1, 114-139. [Journal Ranking: 22/92 in Social Sciences, 5-Year Impact Factor: 1.616] <http://csp.sagepub.com/content/33/1/114.abstract>

Chaney, P. (2013) New legislative settings and the application of the participative-democratic model of mainstreaming equality in public policy making: evidence from the UK's devolution programme, **Policy Studies**, 33, 5, 455-476. [2012 Impact Factor 1.452] <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/.U5YlaSh2Goo#.U5Yleyh2Goo>

Selected Research Projects:

(2014- 2019) Co-Applicant / Award Holder £7M ESRC Large Centres Research Grant ES/L009099/1. Wales Institute of Social, Economic Research and Data.

(2009-10) Equality and Human Rights Commission, A study of equality and human rights during the first decade of devolution - Principal investigator and award holder.

(2007-8) Advice and Guidance to Public Service Providers: Promoting Multi-Strand Equality in the Welsh legislative Context and Beyond, Welsh Assembly Government / UK Government Department for Communities and Local Government. Principal investigator and award holder.

(2004-05) Phase II. Evaluation of the Welsh Assembly Government's Close The Pay Gap Campaign in Wales, commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, the Equal Opportunities Commission Wales, and the Wales TUC. Principal investigator and award holder.

(2004) (with Prof Teresa Rees). The Northern Ireland Section 75 Equality Duty: An International Perspective analysis commissioned by the Northern Ireland Office / Office of the First Minister/ Office of the Deputy First Minister, for the Section 75 Equality Duty Operational

Review - conducted by Professor Eithne McLaughlin and Mr. Neil Faris. Principal investigator and award holder.

(2003-4) Action against Discrimination in Pay Systems: A Preliminary Evaluation of the Welsh Assembly Government's Close The Pay Gap Campaign in Wales, commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government, the Equal Opportunities Commission Wales, and the Wales TUC. Principal investigator and award holder.

(2001-2002) The Equality Policies of the Government of the National Assembly for Wales and their Implementation: July 1999 to January 2002: Project commissioned by: The Equal Opportunities Commission, Disability Rights Commission, Commission for Racial Equality, and Institute of Welsh Affairs.

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Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

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Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

In my view the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly – are cultural, political

and organisational. **Cultural** – the endurance of androcentric attitudes/ practices in society, compounded by gender inequalities in the labour market, unequal domestic division of labour and the prevalence of sexism and discriminatory practices. **Political** – candidate selection procedures in political parties are not gender equal. Sexism and discrimination endure in party practices. Gender power inequalities endure in the main political parties. **Organisational** – vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market and the endurance of the gender pay gap attest to gender inequalities across organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors. In part these observations draw upon my work for (1). The Northern Ireland Section 75 Equality Duty: An International Perspective analysis commissioned by the Northern Ireland Office / Office of the First Minister/ Office of the Deputy First Minister, for the Section 75 Equality Duty Operational Review – co-ordinated by Professor Eithne McLaughlin and Mr. Neil Faris. And (2). the comparative analysis in my book Equality and Public Policy (2011).

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

(This box will expand as you type)

Further to the analysis in: Chaney P, (co-authored) (2007) Women, Politics and Constitutional Change, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, ISBN: 0708318959. pp.253 – and subsequent publications – the following have proved effective in the Welsh context:

- Positive action in candidate selection by the Welsh Labour Party (twinning of constituencies) – and Plaid Cymru (“zipping” of candidates on National Assembly seats elected by PR)
- Mentoring and outreach work to encourage women to stand for election
- Government finding of gender equality networks in civil / civic society
- Government adoption of gender mainstreaming

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

Twinning of constituencies – one female and one male candidate in each pair of constituencies – or – use of quotas.

Parties should adopt gender mainstreaming practices.

Equality Impact Assessments should be used routinely

Gender equality should be achieved on all decision-making forums within parties

Parties’ gender equality practices should be subject to effective external monitoring and scrutiny by an ombuds(wo)man.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

N/A

4. Question

What ‘positive actions’ would you recommend to increase women’s representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

- Positive action in candidate selection - twinning of constituencies – and “zipping” of candidates elected by PR.
- Mentoring and outreach work to encourage women to stand for election
- Government finding of gender equality networks in civil / civic society
- Government adoption of gender mainstreaming

Moreover, serious consideration be given to the use of statutory quotas (i.e. a prescribed number of women in the Assembly).

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

- Based on the evidence in Wales I recommend that more women are given ministerial office as well as chairing Assembly Committees. The Welsh evidence shows how this can translate into the substantive representation of women.
- More effective childcare provision
- Mentoring and training

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

- Gender equality provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998), CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration, EC Directives, and UN Declaration on Human Rights should be embedded in all aspects of the Assembly’s functioning and backed in Standing Orders – and rigorously enforced.
- Family-friendly working hours
- A standing cross-party committee on equalities and human rights
- Adoption of gender mainstreaming practices

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

I believe the Committee should give serious consideration to the use of quotas – and should be mindful of the experience in Wales – namely that positive action measures (twinning of constituencies, “zipping” etc.) can deliver gender equality (50: 50 female/ male split in Assembly members was achieved in the third Assembly) – BUT it fails to address the underlying social-cultural and structural inequalities – such that practices revert to type when affirmative action is withdrawn.

Section 6 – Contact Details

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Assembly and Executive Review Committee
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Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

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Thank you for your submission

Equality Commission for NI

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Equality Commission	Telephone Number: Roisin Mallon Senior Policy Officer (90500551)		
Stakeholder Address Equality House 7-9 Shaftesbury Square Belfast BT2 7DP	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		X
	Non-departmental public body		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

The Commission is responsible for the legislation on race relations, sex discrimination and equal pay, fair employment and disability. The Commission also has important responsibilities for the statutory duty on public authorities to promote equality and good relations.

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- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above**. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures**.

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

¹ http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

There are multiple causes of women's under-representation in decision making – economic, social, cultural and political². It is clear from a range of research reports and inquiries³ that there are a number of key barriers facing women in relation to entering into politics. Some of these barriers can impact not only on women's ability to enter politics but equally to remain in politics. The key barriers, in our view, are summarised below.

2 Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014

3 See for example: Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July, 2014 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014;
Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, Assembly research paper NIAR 570/13, September 2013 - http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf
Speakers Conference on Parliamentary Representation, report, 2010 – <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

Lack of childcare / work life balance

Fulfilling caring responsibilities can limit women's ability to commit time to pursuing a political career. Women are more likely to perform the main childcare responsibilities and a lack of childcare can have a major impact on women's working lives.

For example, research commissioned by the Commission, *Childcare, Maximising the Economic Participation of Women*⁴ (2013) has highlighted that the division of paid work and care in the household is 'often gendered, with mothers assuming greater responsibility for care work and fathers for earning'. The research has also made it clear that the availability of affordable and appropriate childcare is a fundamental part of the process of mothers entering, remaining in, progressing in or returning to work and hence of employment equality⁵.

In Northern Ireland, the availability of affordable childcare is limited and there is a significant dependence on informal care⁶. Women in rural areas, Black Minority Ethnic (BME) women, women caring for disabled children, women living in disadvantaged communities, among others, face additional difficulties in accessing suitable childcare⁷; many of whom are also amongst the most under-represented in political and public life.

Further, the long and irregular hours culture of political life, whether in the Assembly or in constituencies, can exacerbate this problem. A recent Westminster Inquiry *Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House*, by the All Party Parliamentary Group Women in Parliament ('APPG Inquiry') (2014)⁸ found that these factors, as well as potentially having two workplaces, often some distance from each other, combined with a lack of clarification on support available for MPs with primary caring responsibilities, were major factors in the poor retention of women MPs. Childcare was found to be the biggest source of difficulty in political life for 67% of elected women TDs in Ireland in a 2000 study⁹.

In addition, a recent *Women and Peacebuilding Project*¹⁰ (2014) in Northern Ireland has indicated that some women expressed the view that, while equality legislation has been enacted, attitudes have not changed; for example, whilst men have a support system, usually their families, that allow them to become politically active, this can be more difficult for women.

Lack of financial resources

Women can also have less access to financial resources than men and can be deterred from entering politics due to the financial commitments required. Compared to men, women experience lower employment rates, are more likely to be economically inactive, and have higher rates of part time work.¹¹ They are also less well networked with the business and

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- 4 Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women, McQuaid R, Graham H, Shapira M, ECNI, February 2013, commissioned by ECNI.
 - 5 Ditto
 - 6 Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women, McQuaid R, Graham H, Shapira M, ECNI, February 2013, commissioned by ECNI.
 - 7 See Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women, Women living in Disadvantaged Areas: Barriers to Participation, McLaughlin H, March 2009 – http://www.wrda.net/Documents/Barriers_to_Participation_-_Final_March_2009_version_2.pdf ; The Experiences of Ethnic Minority Women in Northern Ireland, Isal S, NICEM, March 2013 – <http://nicem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/EoEMWiNI-11.pdf>
 - 8 Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014
 - 9 The Development of Mechanisms to Monitor Progress in Achieving Gender Equality in Ireland, Galligan Y et al 2000 – https://openlibrary.org/books/OL16002495M/The_development_of_mechanisms_to_monitor_progress_in_achieving_gender_equality_in_Ireland
 - 10 Women and Peacebuilding Project, CFNI, WRDA, NWCI, 2014 – <http://www.communityfoundationni.org/Programmes/Women-and-Peace-Building>
 - 11 See OFMDFM Gender equality strategy statistics 2013, www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk
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financial interests that fund politics¹². A lack of financial resources can be a difficulty not alone with the cost of elections, but also with the financial burden of day to day campaigning.

Lack of confidence

Lack of confidence or low self esteem has been shown to be major barriers to women putting themselves forward in political processes.¹³ When women do become involved, it is often as support rather than in leadership¹⁴.

Further, women living in disadvantaged communities can be particularly vulnerable to low self esteem. For example, as highlighted in research commissioned by the Equality Commission, *Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women*¹⁵, women living in poverty have a greater risk of educational underachievement, and a lack of qualifications can create a lack of confidence to enter the workplace.

Lack of role models, gender stereotypes and culture

The lack of female role models within politics at a local and national level can also act as a deterrent. Further, gender stereotyping can result in politics being seen as a 'traditional role' for men. In addition, the culture of politics and political institutions can act as barriers to women's participation¹⁶.

For example, a recent *Women and Peacebuilding Project*¹⁷ asked women across Northern Ireland about issues of participation and representation in general. This report highlighted barriers due to the fact that the culture of politics was often aggressive and adversarial. In addition, some women expressed fears in relation to voicing their political views especially if they challenged the political status quo in their communities. Participants also indicated that there was a lack of female role models in political life.

Media scrutiny

The APPG Inquiry (2014) in Great Britain has also revealed that the intense level of scrutiny which elected representatives and their families experience is a key negative factor that discourages women from entering political life¹⁸.

Candidate selection

Candidate selection has been identified as a significant obstacle to women's participation¹⁹. There is evidence that female candidates seeking selection can experience discriminatory conduct by selection panels. For example, the results of a recent survey of MPs, as outlined

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- 12 It will be noted, for example, that the APPG Inquiry indicated that 'historically, unlike men, women have not built up the traditional party political networks , for example, through business or trade union contacts', page 21, Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014
- 13 Ditto
- 14 Women in European politics – time for action, European Commission, page 46 – <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2052&langId=en>
- 15 Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women, McQuaid R, Graham H, Shapira M, ECNI, February 2013, commissioned by ECNI.
- 16 The APPG Inquiry noted the 'perceived masculine culture of Parliament'. Respondents to the APPG Inquiry noted that the behavior, which may extend beyond the chamber, would not be tolerated in any workplace or school. Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014
- 17 Women and Peacebuilding Project, CFNI, WRDA, NWCI, 2014 – <http://www.communityfoundationni.org/Programmes/Women-and-Peace-Building>
- 18 Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014
- 19 Galligan in Coakley and Gallagher 2005; examined in page 28, Women in European politics – time for action, European Commission (2009), page 46 – <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2052&langId=en>
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in the *APPG Inquiry (2014)*, revealed that over two-thirds (67%) of female elected members surveyed had encountered discrimination during the selection process; this compared to approximately one-third of male elected members surveyed (33%)²⁰.

In addition, complaints received by the Commission also make it clear that women frequently face discrimination due to their gender; both when seeking to enter, and remain within the workplace. Many of the complaints that we receive relate to employment related discrimination due to pregnancy/maternity, work life balance issues or sexual harassment.²¹

Prejudicial attitudes towards women by candidate selection panels can also act as a barrier. It is of note that the report of the Speaker's Conference into Parliamentary Representation in the UK Parliament in 2010, for example, highlighted that, in most cases, it remains more difficult for a candidate who does not fit the "white, male, middle-class" norm to be selected, particularly if the seat is considered by their party to be winnable²².

Lack of interest in politics

There is also evidence to suggest that, whilst overall public interest in politics is declining, this is particularly evident amongst women²³. Further, research (2012) has indicated that the conflict of three decades has had a dampening effect on women's political ambitions and personal testimonies of women elected to the 1998 Assembly bear out this view²⁴.

Barriers due to multiple identities

Women, including disabled women, BME women, rural women, Lesbian Bisexual and Transsexual women, older women, young women and girls, and women living in disadvantaged communities, can also experience particular additional barriers to entering into political life due to their multiple identities. In addition, the recent **Women and Peacebuilding Project**²⁵ highlighted that participation in political and public life was significantly more difficult for women who 'live at the margins of the community' and that any strategies to achieve gender participation should be culturally aware.

In our *Shadow report to CEDAW*²⁶ we drew attention to the needs of women with multiple identities. In addition, in its Concluding Observations²⁷ the CEDAW Committee called on Government to 'take specific targeted measures to improve the representation of women, in particular black and ethnic minority women and women with disabilities'. It will be noted that the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network²⁸ and the Northern Ireland Council on Ethnic Minorities²⁹ have highlighted the added barriers that rural women and BME women

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- 20 Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014, page 31 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014
 - 21 For example, ECNI statistics in 2013/14 reveal that almost a third (29.0%) of all enquiries/applications for assistance received by the Equality Commission in the area of employment relate to sex discrimination in the workplace; with most enquiries (82%) being made by women.
 - 22 Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation, report, 2010 – <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>
 - 23 For example, in 2009, 42% of men were interested in politics compared to 25% of women, Northern Ireland Life and Times 1998, 2005, 2007, 2009. Question: How interested would you say you personally are in politics?
 - 24 Women's Political Participation, Hinds B, as set out in *Everyday Life after the Conflict, the impact of devolution and cross-border co-operation* McGrattan, Cillian, Meehan eds, MUP, 2012, as quoted in *Women in Politics*, Galligan Y, KESS, 2014 – KESS_Galligan_200314
 - 25 Women and Peacebuilding Project, CFNI, WRDA, NWCI, 2014 – <http://www.communityfoundationni.org/Programmes/Women-and-Peace-Building>
 - 26 CEDAW Shadow Report, ECNI, June 2013 – http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/CEDAW_2013.pdf
 - 27 Concluding Observations on UK, CEDAW Committee, 26 July 2013.
 - 28 In their response to the Westminster Inquiry on the implementation of UN SCR 1325 <http://www.nirwn.org.uk/manager/images/uploads/NIRWNResponseto1325Inquiry.pdf>
 - 29 http://www.2hchr.org/English/bodies/cedaw/docs/ngos/NICEM_ForTheSession_UK_CEDAW55.pdf
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respectively face in terms of access to childcare, employment and the means of political participation.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Initiatives in Northern Ireland

First, we would draw the Committee's attention to the *Women in Local Councils: Making a Difference*³⁰ initiative; a comprehensive model of action on participation in politics and public life in Northern Ireland. *Women in Local Councils* is a pro-active initiative, coordinated by the Local Government Staff Commission and involving the Equality Commission as a key partner, which was set up to address the under-representation of women in councils at elected member level, as senior officers and in service delivery.

Research had shown that women in councils identified a very male dominated culture, long working hours and evening working, poor flexible working arrangements and the use of demeaning language and behaviour as negative factors in addressing gender balance.³¹

When the initiative began in 2006, there were no women chief executives, only 16% of second tier posts were held by women and 14 of the 26 councils had no women in senior posts. In addition, only 22% of the elected members were women.

The Women's Development Steering Group recognised that achieving a cultural shift would require ownership of the initiative by the councils and a political dimension to ensure that elected representatives and parties were at the core of the initiative.

The initiative developed a **declaration of principles** committing to equality and promotion of a culture in which women feel able to participate. A **network of gender champions** was established and **gender action plans** were developed and adopted by councils. Development programmes covering **organisational culture, work / life balance, local democracy, capacity building** and **personal development** were made a priority. A dedicated website was established along with a calendar of events.

When the composition of the local government workforce was analysed in 2009 following three years of the initiative, there were three women chief executives, 26% of second tier posts were held by women and 19 of the 26 councils had women in senior posts. The 11 councils now working in shadow mode have four women chief executives and 25% of councillors elected to them are women.

Not only is it possible to learn from and build on the positive work undertaken in this initiative, but it is also important to note the **clear link** between action to increase female representation at local government level with action to increase female representation amongst Members. In particular, many women gain their first experience of political life as a local government representative, before progressing to a career as a Member in the Assembly.

We note that the recent *Women Peace and Security Strategic Guide and Toolkit* (2014) has recommended that the model of gender action planning developed by this *Women in Local Councils* initiative should be considered by political parties and central and local government

30 See case study in *Making Equality Work*, ECNI, 2013 http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Employers%20and%20Service%20Providers/Making_Equality_Work-Good_Practice.pdf

31 See *Women, Peace and Security: Women's Rights and Gender Equality – developing and applying women, peace and security practice in Northern Ireland / Ireland, Strategic Guide and Toolkit*, Hinds, Donnelly, June 2014, <http://www.communityfoundationni.org/Programmes/Women-and-Peace-Building>

as a mechanism to address the under representation of women in politics, nationally, regionally and locally.³²

It is of note that this *Guide* also recommended that support to increase women's engagement, participation and representation can take many forms; including strengthening existing networks, mentoring young women, empowering women through appropriate skills to build confidence, guidance for women's groups and more sustainable funding.

Other diversity initiatives

We also draw the Committee's attention to initiatives that have been taken forward in other jurisdictions. For example, the Inter-Parliamentary Union has set out a comprehensive framework for creating gender sensitive Parliaments, including through the participation of women³³. They provide case studies illustrating a number of models such as:

- gender action plan (Sweden);
- specialised women's committees or caucuses that can be entrusted with monitoring the progress of gender mainstreaming across parliament (Argentina, Bolivia, Rwanda);
- legislation for gender mainstreaming (Belgium);
- gender impact and gender budgeting mechanisms (Spain, South Africa);
- research programmes (Mexico);
- adapting the way assemblies work (Australia).

The case studies demonstrate the need for comprehensive and coherent policies and practices.

The National Assembly for Wales supports its progress in the participation of women with a significant programme on women in public life. It includes information and awareness lectures, women's development schemes and mentoring programmes. The programme mirrors those undertaken in relation to other under-represented groups such as Operation Black Vote³⁴ which works with Government on a specific programme for BME women councillors.

We are aware that **quotas** in many forms – parliamentary quotas implemented at party level, selection mechanisms, electoral processes – have been used worldwide to improve the representation of women. A recent Assembly research paper³⁵ highlights that, while the impact is complex, in some cases the introduction of quotas 'has made a significant difference, with historical leaps in women's representation'. It further indicates that of the

32 See Women, Peace and Security: Women's Rights and Gender Equality – developing and applying women, peace and security practice in Northern Ireland / Ireland, Strategic Guide and Toolkit, Hinds, Donnelly, June 2014, <http://www.communityfoundationni.org/Programmes/Women-and-Peace-Building>

33 Gender Sensitive Parliaments: A Global View of Good Practice, Inter Parliamentary Union, 2011 – <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf>

34 The work of Operation Black Vote (OBV) covers four main areas:

- Political education – to raise awareness and understanding of democratic and civic society through citizenship projects.
- Political participation – to improve engagement with civic society through local and national voter registration and other civic participation campaigns.
- Political representation – to increase political representation of BME communities through encouraging engagement, undertaking ground breaking mentoring schemes, lobbying political parties and civic institutions on the benefits of representative bodies.
- Promotion of equality and human rights – increasing the awareness of a progressive equality and human rights agenda.

35 The use of quotas to increase the political representation of women, Assembly research briefing paper May 2014, M Potter. See also Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, Assembly research paper NIAR 570/13, September 2013

countries with 30% or more women, the most used system is a legislated candidate quota, where a party list is rejected if the quota is not fulfilled³⁶.

The recent Westminster *APPG Inquiry*, while noting that quotas are not always a popular option or universally accepted, recognised that, even if the current rate of progress in the UK maintained, it will take several electoral cycles to achieve gender parity. This Inquiry noted that ‘more than 50% of the top twenty countries registering sharpest growth in women’s representation have used legal quotas’. The *APPG Inquiry* recommended that if progress is not made on women’s representation in the next election, parties should conduct a review of gender quotas. It also recommended a Parliamentary debate to discuss prescriptive quotas in the House of Commons.

Finally, it is of note that at the next general election in the Republic of Ireland measures will be put in place, further to the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012, to impose financial penalties for parties which do not select 30% at least of men and women as candidates.³⁷

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

As selectors of candidates, political parties have a key role to play in addressing the under-representation of women in politics.

Whilst we both recognise and welcome the steps taken by a range of political parties in Northern Ireland to encourage and support women candidates, for example, the appointment of women’s officers and a strategy to nurture and select more women candidates, the Commission is clear that more can be done.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 permits the taking of positive action in relation to women’s political participation. Political parties are exempted from the normal provisions of sex discrimination law in relation to “*arrangements they adopt for the purpose of reducing inequality in the number of women and men elected*”. This gives wide scope for lawful positive action. We welcome the fact that this exemption which was initially set to expire in 2015, was extended to continue in force until 2030.³⁸

We are aware that the Labour Party in Great Britain has, for example, made use of these provisions and taken positive action in the form of ‘women only shortlists’ in order to ensure greater female representation within its party. In addition, we note that a range of different types of systems have been proposed, and in some instances have been used, to redress an imbalance in the representation of women in elective offices in the UK apart from all-women shortlists.³⁹

Measures can include, for example; ‘twinning’ where two local constituency parties select their candidates jointly, with a requirement that one man and one woman are selected;

36 15 examples are referred to and include countries such as Rwanda, Senegal, Nicaragua, Ecuador, Belgium, Spain, Timor Leste, Mexico, Angola and Argentina. The research paper also indicates that there have been cases where increases have not been as much as the quota or where women’s representation has stopped at the quota and increased no further. In addition, it notes that the vast majority of these countries with 30% or more women have List-Proportional Representation systems which make the introduction of quotas relatively straight forward. Three have ‘First Past the Post System’ as in the UK.

37 This rises to 40% of either sex in any election after 7 years from the first election. A 50% reduction in State funding is applied if these targets are not met. See Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, Assembly research paper NIAR 570/13, September 2013
http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

38 It was extended throughout the United Kingdom under the Equality Act 2010 which came into force in Great Britain in October 2010.

39 As set out in House of Commons, All women Short List Standard Note, 18 Dec 2012.

‘zipping’, which can potentially be used in list type elections, such as the European Parliament or the regional element of the Scottish Parliament or National Assembly for Wales, where the parties selecting the candidates on a list are required to alternate male and female candidates; and ‘balanced shortlists’ where a certain proportion of women are required to be present on a shortlist.

Following the July 2013 examination of the UK Government, the *CEDAW Committee* in its Concluding Observations on the UK⁴⁰, called for more prescriptive temporary special measures to improve the representation of women in political life, as well as in the public and private sectors.

Whilst the *CEDAW Committee* recognised the extension of the provisions in the *Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002* and the provision to allow parties to adopt women-only shortlists, it regretted that additional measures had not been put in place⁴¹.

A *UN Resolution on Women and political participation* (March 2012) sets out the expectations on State parties to ensure women’s enhanced participation in political life⁴². The *UN Resolution* urges State parties to strongly encourage political parties to; remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women; to develop their capacity to analyse issues from a gender perspective; and to adopt policies that promote the ability of women to participate at all levels of decision making within those political parties⁴³.

Securing change will require high level **commitment and leadership** from political parties, as well as a visible demonstration of their commitment to drive and secure change in this area. Drawing on the recommendations set out in the *APPG Inquiry (2014)*⁴⁴ and the *Speaker’s Conference (on Parliamentary Representation)* in Great Britain (2010)⁴⁵, it is clear that there are a range of actions that political parties can take to ensure greater diversity within their party; including in terms of increasing female representation within political parties.

These include, for example:

- challenging any negative gender stereotypes within the party; building a culture within the party that values and respects the role and contribution of women in political and public life; and communicating that commitment to the wider public, particularly to women and representative organisations;
- ensuring that selection panels do not discriminate against candidates on grounds of their sex, and/or pregnancy/maternity;
- ensuring that diversity awareness training, advice and support
- is available to party members; particularly those involved in candidate selections. It will be noted that the Commission has supported the inclusion in the Members’ Code of Practice of clear principles on both equality and good relations and that the standards set out in the Code, including those relating to equality and good relations, should be embedded through appropriate training and induction⁴⁶.

40 Concluding Observations on UK, CEDAW Committee, 26 July 2013.

41 The UK Government will report again to the CEDAW Committee in November 2017

42 UN Resolution A/RES/66/130: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/130&Lang=E

43 UN Res 6(c) – http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/66/130&Lang=E

44 Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July, 2014 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014

45 Speaker’s Conference on Parliamentary Representation, report, 2010 – <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/239i.pdf>

46 ECNI evidence to Northern Ireland Assembly Committee on Standards and Privileges, 4 June 2014 – [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Official-Reports/StandardsandPriv/2013-2014/140604_Reviewofthecod eofconduct\(EqualityCommission\).pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Official-Reports/StandardsandPriv/2013-2014/140604_Reviewofthecod eofconduct(EqualityCommission).pdf)

- undertaking effective and targeted engagement with women and representative organisations in order to raise awareness of, and interest in, political processes and institutions;
- building capacity and providing support, including financial support and/or training and mentoring programmes, to female candidates;
- adopting gender quotas in the selection of candidates;
- taking actions to address specific barriers faced by women with multiple identities, such as disabled women or BME women;
- promoting female role models within the party and taking steps to ensure the contribution of female Members is both recognised and visible;
- reviewing and monitoring actions taken to increase the participation of women, including those with multiple identities, at all levels in political parties;
- improving the collection and transparency of data on the diversity of candidates.

Further, there is a clear link between action to increase female representation at local government level with action at Assembly level. We have made it clear that we support further action measures by government and political parties to address under-representation of women and other interests in elected office in councils⁴⁷.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

(This box will expand as you type)

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

(This box will expand as you type)

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

(This box will expand as you type)

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

Opportunities exist for the Assembly to drive change including via the development of a new cross departmental Gender Equality Strategy being brought forward by OFMDFM as well through the reform of local government where steps can be taken to encourage the participation of women in all aspects of life and decision making in Northern Ireland at a local level.

⁴⁷ Response to DOE Policy Proposals on reform of local government , ECNI, 2010 – <http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Consultation%20Responses/2011/DENILocalGovernmentReformECNIresponse11March2011.pdf?ext=.pdf>

Increasing women's representation in the Assembly will require **leadership** and a **high level of visible commitment** as well as consistent and coherent action across Government, underpinned by a robust monitoring and evaluation framework.

We support the view of the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) that made it clear that 'Parliaments are well placed to provide a strong role model for government agencies and other organizations in mainstreaming gender through their own institutional processes and practices.'⁴⁸ The IPU also recognized that the presence of women in parliament is not enough in itself to ensure progress towards gender equality and that a key issue was a parliament's gender sensitivity and awareness, as reflected in its policies and infrastructure.

We bring to the Committee's attention a range of good practice initiatives that have been either already adopted by Parliaments in other jurisdictions, or recommended as best practice.⁴⁹

- the creation of gender equality committees⁵⁰ and women's parliamentary caucuses⁵¹, and/or mainstreaming gender equality across all committees. It is also of note that the *APPG Inquiry* (2014) has recently recommended⁵² the establishment of a *Women and Equalities Select Committee* to raise issues that are a priority for women and review how women are impacted by Government policy. It considered that the creation of such a Committee would symbolise Britain's commitment to representative democracy and would better hold the government to account on equality.
- ensuring that legislation passed does not discriminate against men and women but instead, actively promotes gender equality;
- improving education, engagement and outreach measures so as to educate the public about the role of parliament and to encourage a wider pool of potential candidates from all backgrounds.
- Such measures could include working with schools to ensure that that the teaching in politics in citizenship classes is done effectively, and supporting youth and community citizenship engagement programmes.⁵³ It will be noted that in Northern Ireland Youth Action's research (2007), *Still Waiting*⁵⁴, found a significant degree of disconnection between girls and young women and politics and participation. The Youth Action research recommended more comprehensive civic education and measures, such as school councils, which were found to have a positive impact.
- changing the culture of the institution by, for example, creating a zero tolerance response to unprofessional language and behaviour, including sexist, bullying and derogatory behaviour, and ensuring effective harassment policies and procedures are in place;
- taking steps to help Members balance work and family life; such as improved flexible working practices; a review of support available for Members with primary caring responsibilities and mothers returning after maternity leave, including the provision

48 Gender Sensitive Parliaments: A Global View of Good Practice, Inter Parliamentary Union, 2011 – <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf>

49 These recommendations are primarily drawn from Gender Sensitive Parliaments: A Global View of Good Practice, Interparliamentary Union, 2011 – <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf> ; and Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014, APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014

50 For example, debate the content of legislation and ensure that gender considerations are taken into account, and which have a range of powers including scrutinising draft legislation. IPU indicated that there advantage lies in their ability to work closely with national women's machinery, equality ombudsmen and NGOs, and in their permanent character and resources.

51 These are cross party co-ordination groups which women parliamentarians participate on a voluntary basis. Such groups have successfully raised the need to legislate on issues relevant to women and gender equality

52 APPG page 19

53 Ass recommended in APPG Inquiry 2014, APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014

54 http://www.youthaction.org/databasedocs/doc_19851037.pdf

of childcare centres within parliament; agreeing a cross party policy so as to improve maternity and paternity leave for all Members;

- providing central support for Members and their staff in relation to human resources issues, such as harassment in the workplace;
- ensuring codes of conduct include reference to gender equality;
- improved diversity and equality training for members;
- increasing the predictability of Parliamentary calendar so that Members can better plan their time and prepare more effectively.
- challenging gender stereotypes in education, the media and in other spheres, including those relating to the role of women and men in the home and the perception of parliamentarians as 'white, middle class men'⁵⁵;
- taking steps to encourage the visibility of female Members in the media in order to challenge stereotypes;
- debating and considering the use of quotas; including the use of all women shortlists;
- providing financial and other support designed to develop the skills, experience of women and other underrepresented groups; including capacity building measures, training, and national mentoring schemes that support people who wish to offer themselves for elected office.
- removing barriers experienced by those with multiple identities;
- encouraging political parties to collect and publish data on the diversity of candidates. It will be noted that the Equality Act 2010 contains provisions, not yet in force, aimed at requiring political parties to collect and publish anonymised diversity data on candidates.

We also draw the Committee's attention to the range of positive action measures recommended in the *UN Resolution on Women and Political Participation* (2012)⁵⁶; which provides a useful reference point for all key stakeholders who seek to take positive action in this area.

- In particular, the *UN Resolution* urges States to:
- review the differential impact of their electoral systems on the political participation of women;
- take all appropriate measures to eliminate prejudice that are based on the idea of inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women;
- promote awareness of the importance and recognition of women's participation in the political process at all levels – community to international;
- develop mechanisms and training to encourage women's participation, as well as tools and skills for empowerment, in consultation with women;
- improve women's access to information and communications, technologies, including e-government tools, in order to enable political participation;
- create an environment of zero tolerance as regards violence, assault or harassment of women elected officials and candidates for elected office;
- encourage greater involvement of women who are marginalised, including indigenous women, disabled women, women from rural areas and women of any ethnic, cultural or religious minority;

55 As referred to in the APPG Inquiry.

56 UN Resolution Women and Political Participation, UN A/RES/66/130

- encourage the promotion of specific programmes for young people and children in particular young women and girls on the importance of the political process and women's participation in politics;
- ensure measures that reconcile family and professional life;
- promote the granting of appropriate maternity and paternity leave;
- tackle measures to address barriers such as violence, poverty, lack of access to quality education and health care and gender stereotypes.

Importantly the UN Resolution stresses the need for action not just in political life **but in all areas of public life**; including governmental bodies and committees, in public sector bodies and in the judiciary. It encourages the setting of specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women in all governmental and public administration positions.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

We consider that there are **cogent reasons** underpinning our recommendation that further action is needed to encourage the participation of women's in political life. In summary, such action:

- helps to tackle key inequalities experienced by women;
- ensures compliance with EU/international standards;
- is consistent with the general principles of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- recognises and values the positive contribution of women;
- is consistent with proactive work being undertaken in other jurisdictions;
- is consistent with the aims and objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016.

Tackling key inequalities

Whilst some improvements have been made in terms of female representation within the NI Assembly, overall this has remained a **persistent** and hard to tackle inequality affecting women⁵⁷. We consider that there is a **clear need** for positive action in light of the fact that the Northern Ireland Assembly has the lowest female representation when compared with other devolved and national legislatures in United Kingdom, with only 20.3% (22 out of 108) of its current Members being female⁵⁸.

In addition, as noted in the Call for Evidence paper, apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the NI Assembly has significantly lower female representations than comparable

57 Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly took place in May 2011, when 20 of the 108 members elected were female (18.5%), which represents an increase on the 18 seats held by females (16.7%) in the previous Assembly elections, in March 2007. At June 2013, of 108 Northern Ireland Assembly seats, 21 were held by females (19.4%). OFMDFM Gender Equality Statistics Update 2013 – <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/gender-equality-strategy-statistics-update-july-2013.pdf>

58 This compares to Scottish Parliament (35% female), Welsh Assembly (40% female) and UK Parliament (House of Commons) (22% female)

Western European legislatures⁵⁹. It is also clear that the representation of female Members within individual political parties varies considerably⁶⁰.

The Commission's Equality Awareness Survey (2011)⁶¹ also revealed increasing **high levels of public support** for more female MLAs, with 63% of respondents indicating that they would like to see an increase in the number of MLAs, an increase from 56% in 2008. It is also of note that this survey revealed that more than half (51%) of people surveyed also wanted to see more MLAs of a different ethnic origin.

Compliance with EU/international human rights standards

Taking action to address female under representation in political life is also **consistent** with **international human rights standards** and best practice recommendations.

The *Good Friday Agreement* committed Government to work for the right of women to *full and equal political participation and the advancement of women in public life*⁶². In addition, the equal participation of women and men in public life is a cornerstone of the *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*⁶³. Under Article 7, for example, the UK Government is required to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life.

In 1995, the Beijing Platform for Action⁶⁴ renewed pressure for the implementation of CEDAW, identifying equality between men and women in power and decision making and the need for mechanisms to promote the advancement of women as '*two areas of significant concern where action was critical*⁶⁵'.

This was further expanded and underpinned by a series of UN Security Council Resolutions⁶⁶ which recognise that '*peace is inextricably linked to equality between women and men..... maintaining and promoting peace and security requires equal participation in decision making*⁶⁷'.

In particular, in 2012, the General Assembly of the UN, in a specific Resolution on '*Women and political participation*', urged all States to take action 'to ensure women's equal participation'⁶⁸ and set out the steps that State parties are urged to take in order to achieve this.

In our recent evidence to the Westminster APPG on Women Peace and Security Inquiry into the implementation of *UN Security Council Resolution 1325* in Northern Ireland in December

59 Call for Evidence, AERC Inquiry into Women in Politics in Northern Ireland – <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/reviews/Women-in-Politics/AERC-call-for-evidence-final.pdf>

60 Alliance (25%), DUP (13%), SF (35%), SDLP (14%), UU (15%), Others (17%).

61 Do You Mean Me, Equality Awareness Survey 2011 ECNI, June 2012 – <http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/DYMMequalityawarenesssurveyreport2012.pdf>

62 The Northern Ireland Peace Agreement (the Good Friday Agreement, April 1998 – <http://peacemaker.un.org/node/1697>

63 CEDAW Article 7: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

64 The Beijing Platform for Action was developed by the 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 – BEIJING PfA – <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>

65 Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers, page 24, IDEA, 2005 – <http://www.idea.int/publications/register.cfm?title=Women%20in%20Parliament%3A%20Beyond%20Numbers%2E%20A%20Revised%20Edition%2E&forwardUrl=%2Fpublications%2Fwpip2%2Floader%2Ecfm%3Fmodule%3Dsecurity%2Fgetfile%26pageid%3D14128>

66 UNSCR 1325 - <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1325> - recognises the critical roles that women and girls play as active agents in conflict prevention and resolution, peace negotiations, peace building and post conflict reconstruction. UNSCR 1325 calls on States to: increase the number of women in decision making and their participation in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and adopt a gender perspective on peace making peace keeping and peacebuilding, as well as protect women and girls from gender based violence. UNSCR 2122 - <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/2122> - sets out in more detail how women should be involved in decision making.

67 UN Secretary General Kofi Annan introducing UN SCR 1325 in 2000 – Press release SG/SM/7598, 24 October 2000 – <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2000/20001024.sgsm7598.doc.html>

68 UN Resolution Women and Political Participation, UN A/RES/66/130

2013, and in our shadow CEDAW report⁶⁹, we stressed that it was vital for Government to identify and implement positive action measures to ensure meaningful participation by women in peace building and political processes here⁷⁰.

It is important to stress that the CEDAW Committee in its *Concluding Observations on the UK* in 2013 remained concerned at the low representation of women in the post-conflict process in Northern Ireland and the failure to fully implement Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and called on the UK Government to:

- continue to take concrete targeted measures to improve the representation of women in Parliament and the judiciary, particularly black and ethnic minority women and women with disabilities; and
- ensure the participation of women in the post-conflict process in Northern Ireland, in line with Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000).

In addition, the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities*⁷¹ (Article 6) which set out the rights of women with disabilities, requires the UK Government to take all appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in UNCRPD. Under the UNCRPD, (Article 29), the UK Government must undertake to ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others.

Further, in 2009, the European Commission's report *Women in European politics – time for action*⁷² showed that progress on women's equal participation had stagnated resulting in a democratic deficit. The Charter, *A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men*⁷³ reaffirmed EU commitment to 'pursue the fairer representation of women and men in positions of power in public life and the economy' and this commitment is demonstrated by a set of targeted initiatives in the *EC Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015*⁷⁴.

Consistent with Section 75

Whilst we recognise that the NI Assembly itself is not subject to the public sector duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, we believe that the NI Assembly, by introducing measures that promote equality between men and women in political life, is acting in a manner that is **consistent with the general principles of Section 75**; legislation which requires public authorities to pay due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between men and women.

69 CEDAW Shadow Report, ECNI, June 2013 –

http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/CEDAW_2013.pdf

70 We recommended that the Committee ask Government to set out the steps to be taken, including temporary special measures, to realise the commitments in the Good Friday / Belfast Agreement on increasing the representation of women in Northern Ireland in political and public life. We note that, while Government has not implemented United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, the UK's 7th Periodic Report records that '[n]evertheless, some aspects of UNSCR 1325, such as women's participation in peace building and political processes, are relevant to all states.' – CEDAW Shadow Report, ECNI, June 2013 – http://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/CEDAW_2013.pdf

71 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – <http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml>

72 Women in European politics: time for action, 2009, page 18 – <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=2052&langId=en>

73 A Strengthened Commitment to Equality between Women and Men: A Women's Charter, 2010, COM (2010) 78 – <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010DC0078:EN:NOT>

74 Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015, 2010, COM (2010) 491 – <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52010DC0491&from=EN>

Positive contribution of women

There is a growing body of evidence that women make a positive difference to the quality of decision making⁷⁵. Research carried out by the Hansard Society⁷⁶ found that, despite the difficulties women face in institutional politics, they can and do bring issues to the table which may not otherwise be debated or which might otherwise be considered to be of less significance. This can have the effect of making the legislature more relevant to the whole population.

Evidence from business, too, shows that women make a positive difference to the quality of decision making⁷⁷. Not to ensure full and equal participation of men and women is to lose skills and experience from the decision making processes and means that different experiences and perspectives of half the country are not being heard.

An Assembly research paper⁷⁸ sets out the considerable imbalance in power towards men in politics, public life and employment as well as in decision making in general across the public sector in Northern Ireland.

Consistent with action being taken in other jurisdictions

Action by the NI Assembly, political parties and key stakeholders in Northern Ireland is consistent with action being taken in other jurisdictions. For example, in both the UK and Ireland the under representation of women has become a concern of government.

In 2010 the Speaker's Conference in UK reported with over 70 recommendations including one on continued highlighting and reporting of progress. The UK Government agreed⁷⁹ that fairer representation is fundamental to a democratic society and accepted the case presented for diversity on the basis of justice, effectiveness and enhanced legitimacy. The *All Party Parliamentary Group on Women in Parliament* report in July 2014⁸⁰ has also set out a series of recommendations on the supply, selection and retention of women in Parliament, stating, 'a democratic parliament should better reflect the society it represents and for which it legislates'⁸¹.

The Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights in the Republic of Ireland has also established a subcommittee on women's participation in politics. The Joint Committee recorded recommendations in 2009⁸², including proposals to introduce financial penalties where parties do not select at least 30% of men or women as candidates to Dáil Éireann.

Consistent with aims and objectives of Gender Equality Strategy

As referred to in the call for evidence paper, action to address women's under-representation in political life is also consistent with aims and objectives of Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016⁸³.

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- 75 Counting Women in Campaign response to House of Lords Joint Select Committee - <http://www.parliament.uk/Templates/BriefingPapers/Pages/BPPdfDownload.aspx?bp-id=lln-2014-008>
- 76 Hansard society research - <http://www.hansardsociety.org.uk/free-parliamentary-affairs-articles-for-international-womens-day/>
- 77 Deloitte survey report – <http://www.deloitte.com/assets/Dcom-BosniaHerzegovina/Local%20Assets/Documents/2013/Women%20in%20Business.pdf>
- 78 Who Runs Northern Ireland? A Summary of Statistics Relating to Gender and Power, Paper 79/14 NIAR 405-14 - http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/7914.pdf
- 79 Government response to Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation, March 2010 - <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-committees/speakers-conference/7824.pdf>
- 80 Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014
- 81 Improving Parliament: Creating a better and more representative House, APPG Women in Parliament, July 2014, page 15 – APPG_ImprovingParliament_072014
- 82 This resulted in continued action measures – <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR11000263>
- 83 Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016, OFMDFM, revised 2010 – <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/gender-equality-strategy-2006-2016-2nd-edition-large-print.pdf>
-

In particular, a strategic objective of the Gender Equality Strategy⁸⁴ is ‘to ensure the active and equal participation of women and men at all levels of civil society, the economy, peace building and government’. Gender indicators⁸⁵ have also been developed to measure success in achieving equality in the representation of women in political life.

Contact Details

Roisin Mallon, Senior Policy Officer, 90500551, rmallon@equalityni.org

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

84 Gender Equality Strategy strategic objectives 2.8 / 2.9 in Gender Equality Strategy 2006-2016, OFMDFM, revised 2010 – <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/gender-equality-strategy-2006-2016-2nd-edition-large-print.pdf>

85 Gender Indicators

ICTU

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Irish Congress of Trade Unions	Telephone Number: 028 90 247 940		
Stakeholder Address Carlin House 4-6 Donegall St Place Belfast BT1 2FN	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		X
	Trade Union Federation		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions is the federation body for trade unions on the Island of Ireland. In Northern Ireland, ICTU represents the interests of approximately 230,000 people working in public and private sector workplaces.

ICTU has a committee based structure which includes a number of equality committees including a women's committee as well as a disability, LGBT and BME Committee. Through these committees and our Northern Ireland Committee, ICTU campaigns for progressive workplace legislation which promotes equality. We are pleased to respond to this review.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above**. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 **Statistical Outline**

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 **Policy**

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

1 http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is ‘representation in public life/decision-making’, which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women’s participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

(This box will expand as you type)

Attitudinal and organisational barriers can pose separate challenges to women entering politics/holding power, but the combination of attitudinal and organisational barriers pose very formidable challenges, which in turn are further enhanced by the structural barriers in society that women face.

For example, women politicians across the UK have referred regularly to the traditional political culture that curtails their interests and participation – debate verging on harassment; informal male-only networking to make bargains and trade-offs; a long hours culture; and, at times, a cold and hostile environment that saps the confidence of some, mainly women. In addition, because their numbers are low, women can be fatally inducted into a way of working that is unnatural to them in order to survive and thus perpetuate the traditional culture.

A study by the Council of Europe in 2008 concluded that ‘obstacles to participation can be related to electoral systems, but also the functioning of political life and its rites and rhythms, that can still follow a dominant male pattern of social organisation’. The report added that ‘they can also be related to the unwritten traditional rules of political parties which, still

too often, tend to function as old boys' networks. Deeper rooted obstacles are linked to educational, social and cultural factors that still tend to privilege the public/political domain as being mainly a male domain'.

In an interview given by Michelle Gildernew, when she was Minister for Agriculture, she said that 'the barriers include the reality of life inside political parties and the fact that many women are put off by the confrontational nature of the current political debate. Many meetings are held in the evenings – it does not matter how well remunerated one is if you are going out the door and the children are coming in from school'. (NI Agenda: June 2010)

The dual burden with women still having the main responsibility for caring and domestic responsibilities is a major challenge with the lack of childcare policy and infrastructure overarching issues restricting women's participation over the years. Women need time and space to contribute and to enable them to take up decision making roles and without proper childcare provision this will not be possible until their children are older. Balancing work and family commitments/caring responsibilities is seen as an individual responsibility, a career planning responsibility for women and men are not generally called upon to make this lifestyle choice. This can mean that many women enter political life at a much later stage than men who have already moved up the ladder into senior positions in their parties.

For women, particularly younger women, this can also mean a lack of role models, which makes it difficult for them to relate to politics. If young women do not see women, and particularly young women, in Local Government and in the Assembly in substantial numbers there is little to encourage them to enter political life.

The media and the stereotypes it perpetuates can also constitute a challenge to those seeking election. Mainstream media is often prone to cultivating a negative stereotypical portrayal of women politicians, with a tendency to put them down and not focus on political achievement. For example, following the re-shuffle of the Cabinet last July, the Daily Mail dedicated much of its front page and a double spread to dissecting the anatomy, dress and makeup of the women Cabinet Ministers. The paper described Esther McVey, Minister of State for Employment, as 'sashaying into Downing Street while wearing a dress that cinched in her waist and emphasised her bust throwing her blonde mane backwards as in a shampoo advert', and slammed Liz Truss, the new Environment Secretary, for 'looking a little bit like an eighties air hostess'.

The above is borne out by the responses from women in NI who recently attended a number of workshops on the issues of participation and representation held as part of an EU funded Women and Peacebuilding Project. Asked if they thought that women's participation on strategic bodies and in decision making institutions was better or worse than 15 years ago their responses included the following:

- the culture of politics in NI was seen as problematic for women, it is very male dominated and often aggressive and adversarial
- concerns were expressed that women who entered public life 'played the man's game' simply to survive and that there was a need to educate political and public representatives about the difference between aggression and assertiveness
- politics in NI was about 'playing games' and women do not like this – consequently they were more likely to get involved in community action and development (informal politics) rather than formal political life or related decision making agencies
- the women believed that there was a lack of female role models in political life – having more women in politics would make politics more inclusive and transparent
- the overall view was that women have become increasingly invisible in decision making over the past 15 years notwithstanding the fact that there has been some increase in the number of women elected to the NI Assembly. However, with the exception of a very small

number of high profile women they tend not to be recognised. Where there was some positive change, it was noticed at Local Government level.

- A number of women expressed the view that although legislation promoting equality has been enacted, attitudes have not changed in any significant manner. Gender specific assumptions prevail and mind sets have not changed. While men have a support system (usually their family) that allows them to become politically active, this can be more difficult for women.

A recent inquiry conducted on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament (Improving Parliament – Creating a Better and More Responsive House 2014) found the consistent themes highlighting the reasons why fewer women seek election were:

- increased media scrutiny of MPs and their families
- the poor public perception of MPs
- a lack of readily available information on the role
- a sense that Parliament is not the place for ‘people like me’ and
- the substantial costs and time demands of seeking election.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

There have been a number of strategies developed both by groups in civil society and by political parties to stimulate women’s interest in pursuing elected office. While largely reflecting supply-side tactics, these initiatives have also sought to raise broader awareness of the need for more women in politics, and therefore to raise the demand for female candidates. These initiatives were thought to be necessary, not because women lack the skills and qualifications to hold political office, but rather because women as a group have not had the same opportunities as men to access a political career.

For this reason, programmes focused on developing this knowledge form a crucial part of any campaign to enhance women’s political representation. The most direct capacity development initiatives in this sense involve training programmes for current or future female candidates, run by political parties or civil society groups.

An example is the *Women2Win* campaign in the Conservative Party, which provides support, advice and training in public speaking and media skills to women who wish to become more politically involved. The group also hosts networking events for women at all levels of politics to meet with one another. Further information is available at: (<http://www.women2win.com>).

A similar initiative was pursued by the Liberal Democrats in the late 1990s whose women’s section launched a *50.50 campaign* to get more women into parliament using the slogan ‘cash, confidence and culture’. They identified these 3 C’s as the three major roadblocks that newcomers face in politics. To this end they set up the Nancy Sear Trust Fund in 1997 to help finance expenses that are often shaped by gender such as child and elder care and travel expenses (to provide cash); developed a programme to shadow MPs (to promote confidence); and encourage the construction of a skills database to recruit to recruit spokeswomen and candidates (to combat the male dominated culture). (Woodward, A., *Going for Gender Balance*, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe 2002)

At Westminster there is an *All-Party Parliamentary Group for Women in Parliament* whose purpose is to increase the number of women Parliamentarians in all parties and to encourage female candidates to get involved in public life and to discuss and highlight the barriers to this. (www.allpartygroupforwomeninpolitics). The APPG has recently published the results of an inquiry to investigate what could be done to create a more aspirational, modern and

representative Parliament which addresses many of the issues raised in this consultation. (Improving Parliament – Creating a Better and More Representative House (July 2104)

A campaign that has gained some national prominence is the *2012 Project*, a non-partisan campaign initiated by the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. (http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/education_training/2012Project/index.php) The campaign is directed at women aged 45 and older, especially those that are in professions that are generally under-represented in politics, such as finance, environment, science, health, technology, and small business. The 2012 Project focuses on older women on the grounds that women of this age are more likely to be at the top of their professions, have fewer family responsibilities (because children may be older) and be financially independent. The project seeks to reach these women at industry conventions through talks led by former female legislators and those who express interest in the project are given information on think tanks, campaign training programmes and fundraising networks that can help them succeed.

Women for Election is a not-for-profit, non-partisan organisation which offers a tailored training and support programme for women seeking to enter public life; and provides and facilitates a cross-party network of political women, committed to equal representation of women and men in Irish politics. It provides a number of programmes designed specifically to empower women and to help them overcome the challenges they may face when considering a career in politics. It has proved successful in that at least half of the women candidates who ran in the recent local government elections in the Republic of Ireland were alumni.

Whilst it is difficult to quantify direct impact on encouraging women to enter into politics, Congress recommends that the NI Assembly examine initiatives which have been run by Civil Society organisations. Congress, for example, has been running a successful *Women and Leadership* training programme for a number of years. Originally funded from the EU Special Support Fund for Peace and Reconciliation, the programme was developed to encourage more women to play an active part in their unions, particularly in leadership roles. It was one of a number of positive action initiatives introduced by Congress to address the under-representation of women in the decision-making bodies within Congress and its affiliates. These also included reserved seats on Executive Committees; Women's Committees and Conferences; childcare facilities at Conferences; Branch meetings held at hours that suited women; women only-training programmes; gender equality audits; and a condition for affiliation to Congress that all union rule books contain a commitment to gender equality. In addition, many unions have now introduced mentoring programmes. Participation in the labour and trade union movements has proved to be a well tested route for women and men to enter into politics, as evidenced by many Labour politicians with a trade union background.

DemocraShe is another example of a civil society organisation established to foster women's participation and leadership. It offers a non-partisan programme of individual and organisational capacity building to support women in all political parties – public policy forums, social and economic issues, media/PR seminars, selection and election procedures, strategic campaign management, fundraising techniques and networking skills. Over three election cycles it trained 250 women and helped to increase the number of women elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly and local government. For example, over the training period women in local government increased from 14% to 22%.

The above examples are representative of a myriad of courses and initiatives, *Women into Politics* being another, which have been developed and run by women's organisations for many years.

Congress would also recommend that the Committee examine a recent report produced by the Commissioner for Public Appointments. Whilst the report comments on the area of public appointments rather than entry into political office, Congress believes that having experience of public appointments is another crucial route for women to consider entering into political life.

In the report, *Under Representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments*, the Commissioner recommends a number of strategic measures to increase women's participation on public bodies including making board diversity a matter for public policy and setting measurable goals along with an overall framework for action by the Executive and Departments and monitored and reported on annually. Congress believes that adopting and **implementing** the measures recommended by the Commissioner would assist in creating a public policy arena where it is understood and clearly articulated that positive actions will be taken to ensure that women (and other under-represented groups) are appointed to public bodies.

Congress believes that high profile role models are of vital importance in relation to encouraging women to engage with politics. In this respect, we would point to the role of the Wales Assembly's Presiding Officer Rosemary Butler, who has run a Women into Public Life campaign over the last number of years and who has also been made a Dame for her role in helping to promote diversity. See <http://www.womenmakingadifference.org.uk/wipl>

Congress is impressed by the resources which have been dedicated to this Campaign, as evidenced by the women making a difference website and understand that at 41.6%, Wales has the highest proportion of women in power – compared to a mere 19.4% in Northern Ireland (source, Sex and Power, who runs Britain 2014 Sex and Power was researched and written by the Centre for Women & Democracy on behalf of the Counting Women In coalition (CFWD, the Electoral Reform Society, the Fawcett Society, the Hansard Society and Unlock Democracy).

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

Each party should develop an Action Plan designed to ensure gender equality in elected office with clearly specific performance targets and should review and monitor the participation of women at all levels in their respective parties.

The issue of candidate selection has been identified as one of the most important obstacles to women's political participation. Congress believes that all political parties have transparent and fair procedures which encourage a more diverse pool of candidates. We would recommend that there should be a review of internal candidate recruitment processes with each party including fast track strategies in party rule books and regulations to allow for specific measures to achieve equality for nominated candidates. There should also be training for all those participating on selection committees.

In addition to the Assembly introducing quotas as a temporary special measure (see 4 below) we would recommend that all parties introduce voluntary positive action measures, for example, via their selection procedures by ensuring that at least one woman is selected for every constituency and equitable placement of men and women in winnable seats and throughout party structures; and monitor and enforce selection complaints and appeals procedures.'

There is evidence that parties are already standing women in winnable seats, at least some of them are. For example, although fewer women stood in the 2011 Assembly election than in the 2007 election, more women were returned. This is an important factor in increasing women's participation.

We would also recommend capacity development to strengthen the skills and resources of women in the pipeline for elected office, including mentoring programmes, skills and media training and funding for women candidates, including dedicated campaign funds for women candidates to help them raise their profile and campaign effectively.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

(This box will expand as you type)

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Congress believes that what is needed is fast track' strategic interventions that can contribute towards the attainment of gender equality in elected office. For example, we would be supportive of temporary special measures, accompanied by timetables and benchmarks, such as quotas to, realise the commitment in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement 'to the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

Over the last decade electoral gender quotas have been increasingly used and have proved a successful method for redressing the imbalance of women's historical exclusion from public and political life. Political parties in over 90 countries have now adopted some kind of gender quota for elections to parliaments and legislative assemblies. For example, the introduction of quotas saw an increase in women's representation in Macedonia from 6.7% in 2000 (prior to the law) to 32.5% in 2010 after the change to the law; and an increase in Belgium from 23.3% in 2000 to 33.95 in 2010; in Spain from 28.3% to 36.6% and in Portugal from 17.4% to 27.4%.

Quotas tend to work when tailored to a country's electoral system, enforced with sanctions, accompanied by rules on where women should be placed on parliamentary lists, connected to a meaningful definition of participation and combined with steps to generate political and public support. Obviously quotas on their own, are not a solution to women's underrepresentation, but will open up the door to increased representation and, along with the review of candidate selection as recommended above, help sustain and further increase that representation.

Any such temporary measure would be in line with Article 4 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women which emphasises 'temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination' and would also be in line with the Beijing Platform for Action Strategic Objectives G1 and G2. Such quotas generally call for women to form between 25 and 50 per cent of all parliamentary candidates nominated by political parties, and while it would be up to the Assembly to set the target to be achieved, we would recommend aiming for 33% as this is the figure quoted by organisational, academic and political studies as the critical mass at which an organisation's or body's agenda becomes diversified and more inclusive at that point.

We are aware of the arguments that quotas are undemocratic and work against meritocracy. In an ideal world, of course, all candidates would be selected on merit, but at the moment this does not happen. If a constituency party is determined to choose a male candidate then no matter however good a woman candidate is, she will not be selected. Positive action is needed not because women cannot succeed on the basis of merit, but because discrimination means that too often women are not given the opportunity to try.

However, quotas should be seen as only one of a number of measures needed to support women in and into legislatures. For example, between 2007 and 2011 there were 14 co-options in the Assembly, including into 3 seats previously held by women. All 14 vacancies were filled by co-opting men. Parties could have chosen women to fill the seats but they did not do so. We would also recommend, as a positive action initiative, that parties should commit to co-opting women, or at least a percentage of women, whenever men vacate seats.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

While the numbers of women in the Assembly are important, Congress believes it is vital to have women in positions of leadership within the Assembly. They need to be seen in the senior positions, as Ministers, as Chairs of Committees, presiding officer and as Speakers. Among other things, women in these positions present a positive role model to other women. There is concern that where women are involved in decision making bodies/agencies, their level of representation decreases with ascending hierarchy – women become less visible. Visibility could be increased, for example, by the rotation of Ministerial posts and Committee chairs.

Greater visibility for women MLAs can also be increased by including women in all delegations and giving them a prominent role, for example, at press conferences, where they are not just standing behind their male colleague as he speaks but being the one who speaks to camera. Additionally, when the media ask for specific male representative for a current affairs programme, nominating, where appropriate to the discussion/subject matter, a female MLA instead.

However, while it is important that women occupy Ministerial and Committee Chair positions, it is important that these are not just what is seen as the ‘soft’ portfolio areas such as employment and education in contrast to the ‘hard’ areas such as the economy, justice and policing. When women are not seen speaking on these issues, this reinforces the perception that these policy areas which are ‘men only’. There is also a need to match leadership positions with members’ abilities and diverse working experience and preferences should be given to women where qualifications are equal to men, as this can also enhance the role of women.

The role of women can also be enhanced through other measures. Congress would also recommend a Gender Equality Committee or a dedicated Equality Committee that deals with mainstreaming gender in the business of the legislature. This could facilitate a gender mainstreaming view to inform all Committee business so that it takes account of the gendered effects of policy and legislation. This would send out a positive message that gender equality is taken seriously by the Assembly.

We would also recommend enhancing parliamentary research into gender issues. For example, recent research on Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly (September 2013) and Review of Gender Issues In Northern Ireland (January 2104) are to be welcomed and are useful tools for those working in these areas.

The role that women MLAs play can also be enhanced through a women’s group or wing which could publicise what they are doing, for example via a Newsletter on their website and circulated to, for example the media and also to women’s groups and other civil society organisations. Regularised links with women groups and cross party networking on behalf of women as a whole is important. Women’s groups can help facilitate this by engaging women from across the parties together on issues that are of concern to them.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

Promoting women’s representation is a multi-faceted process, requiring various strategies to raise awareness of the need for gender balance, to locate and encourage prospective female candidates and to ensure that women receive the resources, skills and tools that can help them succeed in getting elected. However, it is not sufficient to integrate gender equality

issues into policies and procedures if women are unable to make their voice heard effectively once they enter elected office. A 2008 IPU survey of parliamentarians revealed that many women continue to perceive the traditional culture, rules and working practices of parliaments to be problematic. (Ballington, J., *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Men and Women in Parliament*, (Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008). Congress would recommend that the Assembly conduct a gender equality audit to identify problems and issues about women's participation in the Assembly and on foot of this review its internal procedures and institutional facilities to ensure they do not create obstacles to the equal inclusion of women in all decision-making roles.

Moreover new MLAs could face major challenges in learning parliamentary rules, legislative drafting skills and debating procedures, hence parliaments should ensure that new women and men members should have equal access to capacity induction programmes and training.

Legislative bodies are organised around a set of standardised rules, operating procedures and institutional facilities which may generate obstacles to the equal inclusion of women in all decision-making and leadership roles. An OSCE report noted that certain elements of parliamentary culture may deter women from pursuing a political career, like party meetings that take place at night and the lack of childcare facilities. (OSCE/ODIHR, Venice Commission, and Council of Europe, *Joint OSCE/ODHIR – Venice Commission Draft Guidelines on Political Party Legislation* (Strasbourg 2010). By far the greatest challenge highlighted by the survey was balancing work and family life, and while this is difficult for men, it is doubly so for women.

The Assembly should challenge this by rearranging sitting hours with no late sessions at night or during school holidays and by entitling all members to parental leave. Congress would recommend the introduction of an agreed policy on maternity and paternity leave and that the Assembly could also make particular arrangements for women MLAs returning after maternity leave by allowing proxy votes, votes by phone etc and perhaps, most importantly, establishing childcare facilities in the Assembly. Congress understands that the Wales Assembly has adopted a number of family friendly policies, including a number of guaranteed subsidised nursery places for employees children as well as adopting a number of enhanced measures which have led to the Welsh Assembly being recognised as in the top 10 UK employers, accredited by the Top Employers for Working Families organisation (TEWF), an industry-recognised bench marker for good practice when it comes to providing a working environment that allows for a positive work/life balance.

We would also advocate a gender action plan that would clearly state the Assembly's commitment to gender equality and a clear and detailed set of objectives and processes for achieving this. Under this overarching policy should be a suite of related policies, such as a code of conduct to prevent harassment and the use of derogatory and sexist language.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

Despite the concluding observations from the CEDAW Committee in 2008 calling for the ‘full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 in Northern Ireland’ this issue has still to be addressed by the UK Government. This is an obvious vehicle by which to implement the commitment made by the parties to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement ‘to the right of women to full and equal political participation’. A clear commitment to the implementation on UNSCR 1325 is not only central to increasing women’s participation in political and decision-making bodies, but also to ensure their participation in policies aimed at addressing the legacy of the conflict. The response by Lynn Featherstone (Minister for Women and Equalities) to a Parliamentary Question in 2012 where she stated: ‘Some aspects of UNSCR 1325 such as participation in peace and political processes are relevant to all states and the Government will work towards increasing the representation of women in Northern Ireland in public and political life’ (Official Report [Hansard] 13 March 2012) would appear to open the door to the UK Government taking this approach.

Congress believes it crucial that UNSCR 1325 be actioned in Northern Ireland to implement such initiatives as they need to be underpinned by the status that 1325 would give. Without that status the commitment in the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement for the ‘right of women to full and equal political participation’ will remain an aspiration without legal standing or the means to ensure that full and equal participation is build into all the institutions, including the Assembly, directly established as a result of the peace process.

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC)

Response to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Call for Evidence in relation to the Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly'

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the NIHRC or the Commission) is a statutory public body established in 1999 to promote and protect human rights. In accordance with Section 69(1) of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) the Commission reviews the adequacy and effectiveness of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights in Northern Ireland (NI). In accordance with this function the following statutory advice is submitted to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee in response to the Call for Evidence in relation to the Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly'.
- 1.2. The Commission bases its position on the full range of internationally accepted human rights standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), as incorporated by the Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) and the treaty obligations of the Council of Europe (CoE) and United Nations (UN) systems. The relevant international treaties in this context include:
 - The European Convention on Human Rights, 1950 (ECHR) [UK ratification 1951];
 - The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) [UK ratification 1976];
 - The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966 (ICESCR) [UK ratification 1976];
 - The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)[UK ratification 1986];
 - Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union [UK ratification 2000]
 - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)[UK ratification 2009]
- 1.3. The NI Executive is subject to the obligations contained within these international treaties by virtue of the United Kingdom's (UK) ratification.¹ In addition, Section 26(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that *"If the Secretary of State considers that any action proposed to be taken by a Minister or Northern Ireland department would be incompatible with any international obligations... he may by order direct that the proposed action shall not be taken."* Further, Section 26(2) states that *"the Secretary of State may, by order, direct that an action be taken on a matter within the legislative competency of the Assembly as required for the purpose of giving effect to international obligations. Such action can include the introduction of a Bill into the Assembly."*
- 1.4. The NIHRC further recalls that Section 24 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 provides that *"A Minister or Northern Ireland department has no power to make, confirm or approve any subordinate legislation, or to do any act, so far as the legislation or act – (a) is incompatible with any of the Convention [ECHR] rights."*
- 1.5. In addition to these treaty standards there exists a body of 'soft law' developed by the human rights bodies of the UN and the CoE. These declarations and principles are non-binding but provide further guidance. The relevant standards in this context include:

1 Treaties are written agreements to which the participating States are legally bound. See Shaw, M., International Law (Cambridge, 2003), p 88.

- Beijing Platform for Action adopted by the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995);
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325, S/RES/1325 (2000);
- Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003;
- Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1676 (2004): Women's participation in elections;
- Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Declaration: Making gender equality a reality, CM(2009)68;
- Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1706 (2010): Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system;
- Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1899 (2010): Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system;
- UN General Assembly Resolution, 'Women and political participation', A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012.

- 1.6. The Commission welcomes the commitment illustrated by this Review to analyse the barriers facing women in politics in NI and notes the potential for the Review and its recommendations to contribute to steps which would increase compliance with international human rights obligations. In this regard the Commission recalls that the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Committee) in 2013:

stresse[d] that the Convention is binding on all branches of government and invite[d] the State party to encourage its parliaments, in line with their procedures and where appropriate, to take the necessary steps with regard to the implementation of the present concluding observations...²

The Committee called upon the UK to “continue to take specific targeted measures to improve the representation of women, in particular black and ethnic minority women and women with disabilities, in Parliament and the judiciary.”³

2. Barriers Facing Women in Relation to Politics

- 2.1. International bodies considering issues regarding women's participation in political and public decision-making have identified a number of elements, for example, the “functioning of electoral systems and political institutions, including political parties,” which may impede women's participation.⁴
- 2.2. The CEDAW Committee has explained that “failure to achieve full and equal participation of women can be unintentional and the result of outmoded practices and procedures which inadvertently promote men.”⁵
- 2.3. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action noted that:

The traditional working patterns of many political parties and government structures continue to be barriers to women's participation in public life. Women may be discouraged

2 CEDAW Committee, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 30 July 2013, para 9.

3 CEDAW Committee, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 30 July 2013, para 43(a).

4 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003.

5 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 15.

from seeking political office by discriminatory attitudes and practices, family and child-care responsibilities, and the high cost of seeking and holding public office.⁶

2.4. The Parliamentary Assembly of the CofE outlined that:

In Europe, societies remain characterized by attitudes, customs and behaviour which disempower women in public life, discriminate against them, and hold them hostage to prescribed role-models and stereotypes according to which women are “not suited” to decision making and politics. Unsocial meeting hours and a lack of child-care facilities for politicians can further deter women candidates – politics is tailored to fit men who do not bear even a minimum share of family responsibilities and who rely on their wives to keep the household running.⁷

2.5. The Committee of Ministers of the CofE has stated that “in spite of the existence of de jure equality, the distribution of power, responsibilities and access to economic, social and cultural resources between women and men is still very unequal due to the persistence of prevailing traditional gender roles.”⁸ Furthermore, the low involvement of women in professions from which politicians are recruited can create another obstacle.⁹

2.6. The CEDAW Committee has advised that the “position of women will not be improved as long as the underlying causes of discrimination against women, and of their inequality, are not effectively addressed.”¹⁰ In a similar vein the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action stated that “[i]nequality in the public arena can often start with discriminatory attitudes and practices and unequal power relations between women and men within the family,” highlighting the “unequal division of labour and the responsibilities within households based on unequal power relations...”¹¹

3. Women in politics in a post-conflict society

3.1. The Commission recalls that the CEDAW Committee, examining women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, identified women’s equal, meaningful and effective participation in the various branches of government and their appointment to leadership positions in government sectors as “prerequisites for creating a society with lasting democracy, peace and gender equality.”¹²

3.2. The CEDAW Committee has outlined that:

The full participation and involvement of women in formal peacemaking and post-conflict reconstruction and socioeconomic development are often not realized on account of deeply entrenched stereotypes, reflected in the traditionally male leadership of State and non-State

6 Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 182.

7 Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1706 (2010): Increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system, para 3.

8 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003. See also, CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 14.

9 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 12.

10 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 10.

11 Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 185. See also, UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (I); CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 10.

12 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, CEDAW/C/GC/30, 2013, para. 42.

groups, which exclude women from all aspects of decision-making, in addition to gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination against women.¹³

- 3.3. The UK Government has noted that within “Northern Ireland UN [Security Council Resolution] 1325 is widely acknowledged as an important international commitment to women’s equality and empowerment, particularly as regards women’s access to politics, public life and decision-making.”¹⁴
- 3.4. However, in 2013 the CEDAW Committee in its concluding observations remained “concerned at the low representation of women in the post-conflict process in Northern Ireland and the failure to fully implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).”¹⁵
- 3.5. The Commission notes the work of the Stormont All Party Working Group on UNSCR 1325: Women, Peace and Security and recalls the Westminster Associate Parliamentary Group on UN Security Council Resolution 1325’s Inquiry into the actions and level of implementation of UNSCR 1325 Women Peace and Security for Women in Northern Ireland since the Peace Process.
- 3.6. The Commission recalls that States’ obligations to ensure women’s equal representation in political and public life require:

measures, including temporary special measures under [CEDAW] article 4(1), to address this broader context of gender discrimination and inequality in conflict-affected areas, in addition to the specific and multiple barriers to women’s equal participation that are linked to additional conflict-related restrictions on mobility, security, fundraising, campaigning and technical skills.¹⁶

4. Positive Obligations

- 4.1. The UK, as a State Party to the ICCPR, has undertaken “to ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all civil and political rights set forth in [that] Covenant.”¹⁷ The UN Human Rights Committee has stated that pursuant to the Covenant:

States must ensure that the law guarantees to women article 25 rights¹⁸ on equal terms with men and take effective and positive measures to promote and ensure women’s participation in the conduct of public affairs and in public office, including appropriate affirmative action.¹⁹

13 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, CEDAW/C/GC/30, 2013, para. 43.

14 Questionnaire to Governments on the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the Outcome of the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly (2000), United Kingdom Response, May 2009, available at: <http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/documents/Beijing+15/UK.pdf>, p. 14.

15 CEDAW Committee, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 30 July 2013, para 42.

16 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, CEDAW/C/GC/30, 2013, para. 44.

17 ICCPR, Art. 3. UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 28, Equality of rights between men and women (article 3), 2000, para 3: “The obligation to ensure to all individuals the rights recognized in the Covenant, established in articles 2 and 3 of the Covenant, requires that State parties take all necessary steps to enable every person to enjoy those rights. These steps include the removal of obstacles to the equal enjoyment each of such rights, the education of the population and of state officials in human rights and the adjustment of domestic

18 ICCPR, Art. 25: Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in Article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country.

19 UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 28, Equality of rights between men and women (article 3), 2000, para 29.

4.2. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union states that “Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex.”²⁰

4.3. CEDAW, Art. 7²¹ requires that:

States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country and, in particular, shall ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right: (a) to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; (b) To participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; (c) To participate in non-governmental organisations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

4.4. The CEDAW Committee has stated that in the context of CEDAW, Arts. 6-9:

legislation so as to give effect to the undertakings set forth in the Covenant. The State party must not only adopt measures of protection but also positive measures in all areas so as to achieve the effective and equal empowerment of women.” See also, ICESCR, Arts. 3, 6, 7, and 10; UNCRPD, Arts. 3, 6, 27, and 29.

States parties are obliged to adopt and implement temporary special measures in relation to any of these articles if such measures can be shown to be necessary and appropriate in order to accelerate the achievement of the overall, or a specific goal of, women’s de facto or substantive equality.²²

4.5. The CEDAW Committee has explained that in order to achieve equality between men and women

It is not enough to guarantee women treatment that is identical to that of men. Rather, biological as well as socially and culturally constructed differences between women and men must be taken into account. Under certain circumstances, non-identical treatment of women and men will be required in order to address such differences.²³

Thus, the “formal removal of barriers and the introduction of temporary special measures to encourage the equal participation of both men and women in the public life of their societies” have been identified by the Committee as “essential prerequisites to true equality in political life.”²⁴

20 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Art. 23. See also, Art. 21.

21 See also, CEDAW, Art. 3: States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men.

22 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 24. See also paras 29 and 39 and CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 15. Article 4(1) of the Convention provides that the adoption of temporary special measures “aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women” shall not be considered discrimination. These measures “shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.”

23 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 8.

24 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 15.

- 4.6. In 2013 the CEDAW Committee, examining the UK's compliance with CEDAW, expressed its concern:
- at the failure of the State party to introduce further temporary special measures to address the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions in the public and private sectors, as well as in political life, especially in Parliament.²⁵
- The Committee recommended that the UK “consider using more prescriptive temporary special measures to improve the representation of women in the public and private sectors, in particular... in political life.”²⁶
- 4.7. The use of temporary special measures is part of a “necessary strategy” and one of the means of realizing substantive equality for women as required under CEDAW, rather than an exception to the norms of non-discrimination and equality.²⁷
- 4.8. The Committee of Ministers of the CoE has urged Member States to
- Adopt or implement specific policies and action plans at different levels and ensure their adequate financing; enable positive action or special measures to be adopted in order to achieve balanced participation, including representation, of women and men in decision-making in all sectors of society, in particular... in political and public decision-making.²⁸

A wide range of measures have been recommended that States can utilise to comply with their international human rights obligations and in order to advance equality between men and women in the political sphere. These measures include a variety of legislative, executive, administrative and other regulatory instruments, policies and practices.²⁹ To assist the Assembly and Executive Review Committee the Commission provides the attached non-exhaustive Appendix of some examples of such measures: this follows a similar structure to that used in the CoE Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making.

The Commission advises that in order to ensure compliance with the UK's international human rights obligations the Assembly and Executive Review

Committee should consider the obligations and measures set out in this response as it is conducting this Review. The Committee should consider if some of these measures are currently being implemented through existing mechanisms and could be enhanced, and if additional mechanisms should be introduced. The Commission is available to assist the Committee further if required.

September 2014

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- 25 CEDAW Committee, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 30 July 2013, para 30.
- 26 CEDAW Committee, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 30 July 2013, para 31.
- 27 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, paras 18 and 14.
- 28 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Declaration: Making gender equality a reality, CM(2009)68, para 2; Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(1): Consider possible constitutional and/or legislative changes, including positive action measures, which would facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making.
- 29 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 22.
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Appendix

A. Legislative, Administrative and Supportive measures

Improve working conditions and eliminate prejudices

A.1. The UN General Assembly has urged States to:

Take all appropriate measures to eliminate prejudices that are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women and that constitute a barrier to women's access to and participation in the political sphere, and to adopt inclusive approaches to their political participation.³⁰

A.2. Areas that have been identified as requiring possible changes include: official language;³¹ working conditions;³² mainstreaming gender equality throughout all parliamentary work;³³ developing anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies;³⁴ strengthening gender equality legislation and policy;³⁵ and support for elected representatives in reconciliation of family and public responsibilities for example regarding sitting hours, childcare and parental leave.³⁶

A.3. The Committee of Ministers of the CoE called on Member States to:

Consider adopting legislative reforms to introduce parity thresholds for candidates in elections at local, regional, national and supra-national levels. Where proportional lists exist, consider the introduction of zipper systems.³⁷

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- 30 UN General Assembly Resolution, 'Women and political participation', A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (b).
- 31 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(2) "[Members states should] adopt administrative measures so that official language reflects a balanced sharing of power between men and women."; Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Action Area 2, p. 19.
- 32 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(7): "[Member States should] adopted appropriate legislation and/or administrative measures to improve the working conditions of elected representatives at the local, regional, national and supra-national levels to ensure more democratic access to elected bodies." See also, UN General Assembly Resolution, 'Women and political participation', A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (m): "To promote the granting of appropriate maternity and paternity leave in order to facilitate women's political participation."; Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Action Area 7.
- 33 Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Action Area 3.
- 34 Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Action Area 2, p. 19 and Action Area 4, p. 25: "To ensure a safe, respectful, non-discriminatory and harassment-free workplace, parliaments should: Conduct a gender-based analysis of parliamentary rituals, dress codes, forms of address and commonly used language, conventions and rules. Provide gender-awareness training seminars for all members of parliament and ensure that induction for new members is gender sensitive..."
- 35 Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, p. 14, Action Area 2.
- 36 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(8): "[Member States should] adopted appropriate legislative and/or administrative measures to support elected representatives in the reconciliation of their family and public responsibilities and, in particular, encourage parliaments and local and regional authorities to ensure that their timetables and working methods enable elected representatives of both sexes to reconcile their work and family life." See also, UN General Assembly Resolution, 'Women and political participation', A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (l); Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 190(i); Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Action Area 4, p. 24-25.
- 37 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(3). See also, Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1899 (2010): Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system, para. 2.1. See also, CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 15.
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- A.4. The Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments proposes a number of measures for parliaments to implement, including “propose amendments to electoral laws and national constitutions that provide for reserved seats.”³⁸
- A.5. The NIHRC notes that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee has agreed that “Alternative electoral systems and modes” fall outside the scope of this Review.
- A.6. The NIHRC recalls that measures in this regard have been recommended in order to achieve equality between men and women in politics. The CofE, Committee of Ministers has advised that “where electoral systems are shown to have a negative impact on the political representation of women in elected bodies” member states should “adjust or reform those systems to promote gender-balanced representation.”³⁹ Similarly, the UN General Assembly urged “all States... To review the differential impact of their electoral systems on the political participation of women and their representation in elected bodies and to adjust or reform those systems where appropriate.”⁴⁰
- A.7. The NIHRC recognises that “Elections, including the franchise, in respect of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the European Parliament and district councils” are excepted matters.⁴¹ However, the NIHRC notes that it would be appropriate for the devolved administration to engage with the UK government on this issue in order to further compliance with international human rights obligations.

Political parties

- A.8. International standards have also noted the need for political parties to make changes in order to further the participation of women in politics. For example, States should “consider action through the public funding of political parties in order to encourage them to promote gender equality.”⁴² The NIHRC notes that a number of issues related to political parties in Northern Ireland are excepted matters.⁴³ Still, the Commission notes that the devolved administration could engage with the UK Government regarding any proposed measures that would address excepted matters.
- A.9. The Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments proposes measures for parliaments to consider “in line with their national context”, including to; “adopt special measures to ensure that higher numbers of women are selected by parties to run in ‘winnable’ seats...”⁴⁴ Similarly, the CEDAW Committee has stated that “political parties

38 Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, p. 14, Action Area 1.

39 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(5).

40 UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6. See also, Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 190(d): “Review the differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of those systems.”; CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 15: amending electoral procedures.

41 Northern Ireland Act (1998), Schedule 2, Excepted Matters, Article 12.

42 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(4). See also, B(27): “inform political parties of the different strategies used in the various countries to promote the balanced participation of women and men in elected assemblies; encourage them to implement one or more of these strategies and to promote balanced participation of women and men in positions of decision making within the party structures.”; Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 190(b).

43 Northern Ireland Act (1998), Schedule 2, Excepted Matters, Article 13.

44 Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, p. 14, Action Area 1.

also have a responsibility to ensure that women are included in party lists and nominated for election in areas where they have a likelihood of electoral success.”⁴⁵

A.10. The UN General Assembly urged States to

strongly encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, to develop their capacity to analyse issues from a gender perspective, and to adopt policies, as appropriate, to promote the ability of women to participate fully at all levels of decision-making with those political parties.⁴⁶

Selection, recruitment and appointment processes

A.11. The CEDAW Committee has listed measures that have been adopted in order to ensure equal participation by women in senior cabinet and administrative positions and as members of government advisory bodies. These include: adoption of a rule whereby, when potential appointees are equally qualified, preference will be given to a woman nominee; the adoption of a rule that neither sex should constitute less than 40 per cent of the members of a public body; a quota for women members of cabinet and for appointment to public office; and consultation with women’s organizations to ensure that qualified women are nominated for membership in public bodies and offices and the development and maintenance of registers of such women in order to facilitate the nomination of women for appointment to public bodies and posts.⁴⁷

A.12. The Committee of Ministers of the CoE has advised that Member States should ensure that there is gender balanced representation in appointments by a minister or government to public committees and in posts or functions whose holders are nominated by government and other public authorities.⁴⁸ Furthermore, selection, recruitment and appointment processes for leading positions in public decision making and in governmental representation should be gender sensitive and transparent and due account should be taken of gender balance in appointments.⁴⁹

45 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 27. See also, UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (g).

46 UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (c). See also, Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1706 (2010): Increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system, para 6.5: “encouraging political parties to voluntarily adopt gender quotas and to take other positive action measures, also within their own decision-making structures, and especially in the party structure responsible for nomination of candidates for elections.”; Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1899 (2010): Increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system, para. 2.3; Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 191(a)-(c); 46 Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Action Area 2, p. 19 and Action Area 6: Encourage political parties to be champions of gender equality.

47 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 29. See also, Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, B(19) “consider the setting up of a data bank of women willing to serve in political and public decision-making positions.”; Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, paras 190(a) and 192(c); Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, p. 14, Action Area 1.

48 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(9) and (10). See also, UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 8.

49 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(11), (12), (13) and (14). See also, UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (g).

- A.13. States should “implement appropriate measures within governmental bodies and public sector institutions to eliminate direct or indirect barriers to and enhance women’s participation in all levels of political decision-making.”⁵⁰

Support, information, and training

- A.14. A number of recommendations call for enhanced support and training; for example the UN General Assembly:

Encourages States and relevant civil society organizations to support programmes that facilitate women’s participation in political and other leadership activities, including peer support and capacity development for new office holders, and to promote public/private civil society partnerships for women’s empowerment.⁵¹

- A.15. Additional measures identified include: outreach or support programmes; allocation and/or reallocation of resources;⁵² mentoring;⁵³

recruiting, financially assisting and training women candidates; developing campaigns directed at equal participation.⁵⁴

- A.16. International provisions have also recommended support for the work of women’s organizations,⁵⁵ national equality machinery,⁵⁶ and non-governmental organizations and research institutes;⁵⁷ and the setting up or support of “parliamentary committees or delegations for women’s rights and equal opportunities.”⁵⁸

Promote Change and Awareness

- A.17. States have also been advised to take action which will increase awareness and recognition at all levels, including politicians,⁵⁹ the general public and media professionals, of “the

50 UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (f). See also, CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 15.

51 UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 10. See also, Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, B(21): “develop and support mentoring/work-shadowing programmes, confidence building, leadership and media training for women considering entering political and public decision making.”

52 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 22; Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, p. 14, Action Area 2, p. 19 and Action Area 4, p. 25.

53 Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Action Area 1 and 4, p. 25.

54 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 23 on Women in Political and Public Life, adopted at the sixteenth session, 1997, para 15.

55 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, B(18).

56 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(16).

57 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, B(34). Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 190(f).

58 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, A(17).

59 Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Action Area 2, p. 19 and Action Area 5, p. 26.

importance of gender-balanced representation in political and public decision making.”⁶⁰ States are further encouraged to promote campaigns to address factors which may prevent or hinder women from participating in politics, for example, “encouraging the sharing of responsibilities between women and men in the private sphere.”⁶¹

B. Monitoring and Collection of Data

B.1. Monitoring mechanisms and collection of disaggregated data⁶² should be included as an important part of any steps introduced to address these issues. The CofE Committee of Ministers recommended that Member States should:

consider establishing independent bodies, such as a parity observatory or a special independent mediation body, with a view to following governmental policy in the field of balanced participation of women and men in political and public life, or entrust national equality machineries with this task.⁶³

B.2. The Beijing Platform for Action also calls for monitoring and evaluation of progress in the representation of women:

through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data on women and men at all levels in various decision-making positions in the public and private sectors, and disseminate data on the number of women and men employed at various levels in Government on a yearly basis; ensure that women and men have equal access to the full range of public appointments and set up mechanisms within governmental structures for monitoring progress in this field.⁶⁴

B.3. Temporary special measures that are adopted should include concrete goals and targets, timetables, steps to enable women to access such measures, and the institution accountable for monitoring implementation and progress.⁶⁵ The relationship between any temporary

60 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, B(30), (23), (33), (40) and (32): “promote campaigns aimed at specific groups, in particular politicians, social partners and those who recruit and nominate political and public decision makers in order to raise their awareness of the importance of gender-balanced representation in political and public decisionmaking.” See also, UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (d) and (k); Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1676 (2004): Women’s participation in elections, para. 7; Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 1899 (2010): Increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system, para. 2.3; Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, p. 14, Action Area 1: “...Conduct awareness-raising campaigns on the importance of women’s representation in parliament.”

61 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, B(31), UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (n); Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 190(i); Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, p. 14, Action Area 1: “Condemn acts of violence against women candidates and parliamentarians and adopt legal and practical measures to prevent and punish such acts.”

62 The CEDAW Committee has recommended that States parties provide statistical data disaggregated by sex “in order to measure the achievement of progress towards women’s de facto or substantive equality and the effectiveness of temporary special measures.” CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 35.

63 Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, Recommendation No. R (2003) 3 on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, adopted 12 March, 2003, C(42) and C(43)-(48). See also, Interparliamentary Union, Plan of Action for Gender-sensitive Parliaments, 2012, Part 3, p. 35.

64 Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, para 190(e) and 192(b). See also, UN General Assembly Resolution, ‘Women and political participation’, A/Res/66/130, 19 March 2012, para 6 (o) Urges States to take the following actions...: “To monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women in decision-making positions.”

65 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 36.

special measures, and general measures and efforts to improve the position of women, should be considered.⁶⁶

- B.4. Monitoring mechanisms should ensure that the measures introduced are having the desired effect, and that any temporary special measures whose impacts have been sustained for a period of time and that are no longer needed, are discontinued. In this regard, the CEDAW Committee noted that:

as steps are being taken to eliminate discrimination against women, women's needs may change or disappear, or become the needs of both women and men. Thus, continuous monitoring of laws, programmes and practices directed at the achievement of women's de facto or substantive equality is needed so as to avoid a perpetuation of non-identical treatment that may no longer be warranted.⁶⁷

- B.5. The Commission notes that such monitoring should consider the concrete results of the measures as the

duration of a temporary special measure should be determined by its functional result in response to a concrete problem and not by a predetermined passage of time. Temporary special measures must be discontinued when their desired results have been achieved and sustained for a period of time.⁶⁸

- B.6. It is important to distinguish between temporary special measures, which should be discontinued when conditions change, and those measures which constitute the provision of "general conditions in order to guarantee the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights" of women and girls, which are not temporary special measures.⁶⁹

66 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, paras 26 and 28.

67 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 11.

68 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 20.

69 CEDAW Committee, General recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1 - Temporary Special Measures, adopted at the thirtieth session, 2004, para 19.

Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: NIRWN (as member of the Women's Regional Consortium)	Telephone Number: 02887753389			
Stakeholder Address NIRWN Unit 13a Gate C Ballysaggart Business Complex 8 Beechvalley Way Dungannon BT70 1BS	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)			
	Registered Political Party		Local Government	
	Academic		Government	
	Legislature		Non-Government	X
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public			

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

NIRWN (Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network) work regionally across rural Northern Ireland to amplify and articulate the voice of rural women at local, regional and strategic level. NIRWN work as a partner within the Women's Regional Consortium.

The under representation of women in public and political life is an issue regularly raised by our membership and across the Consortium. NIRWN and WRDA held 2 separate focus groups in direct response to this questionnaire; one rural and one in Belfast to canvass the

views and experiences of our membership. Their views are reflected in this response actual quotations from women have been italicized.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above. This will include evidence from Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014.**

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

1 http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to *‘the right of women to full and equal political participation’*.

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is ‘representation in public life/decision-making’, which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

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Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women’s participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Barriers to Being Interested in Participating

The feedback from both of our focus groups identified the **adversarial set up of NI Politics** as a key barrier to women being interested in participating: *‘women are simply not interested in the orange and Green of how things work here, women care about health, education, how much things cost’*. *‘Politics here is conflict led instead of reconciliatory or cooperative’*.

Women are also put off by the **political environment** they felt women are ignored and *‘shouted down’* and the perceived aggressive nature of the environment they would be working in is also off putting. The belief was that if there were more female representatives; a **critical mass** that these issues would improve along with an improvement in policies that would have a more positive impact on women’s lives.

Young women in particular don’t necessarily see the relevance of politics to their lives; they have **apathy** and are **disengaged**. Young women expressed that they felt politics was full of

*‘old men who just want to argue with each other instead of listening to what people want’. The older demographic were largely **disillusioned** by what they perceived as the lack of progress made in recent years on ‘real issues’ and they felt that ‘politicians only want to know what you think when they knock your door once every four years for a vote; they don’t care about how they could change things for the better for you, they just want to be sure they are being paid for the next four years, sure with their salaries and expenses they don’t know what our lives are like.’*

The perception across the age range of those we asked was that politics is so heavily **male dominated** that it would be very daunting to participate.

Barriers to Participating even if Interested

Lack of Structural support

The lack of flexible, affordable **childcare** was stated by all as a barrier to participation in NI politics. **N Irish culture** our members felt dictates that the women are the primary caregivers (so if there are two careers in a family, women tend to be the one to step back and pick up the family responsibilities). *‘Women have the right to have two jobs-raising their family and working’ any work you have has to be flexible.* In NI raising a family is not viewed as valuable and is viewed therefore as women’s work; while in Sweden the culture values parents raising children. The best support for children is where women and men both play a role and the state supports this.

Travel for our rural focus group in particular was raised as a significant barrier to participation; rural women felt that particularly West of the Bann travel to Stormont every day in both **financial cost** (of both the travel and the extra childcare); and **time** spent travelling inhibited even thinking of working as an Assembly member.

The **culture of politics** is not family friendly e.g. meeting times, hours worked outside normal office hours etc does not lend itself to family life nor accessing childcare provision.

There is a **lack of training/qualifications** for politicians and the women we spoke to felt that if there was a qualification or suite of small qualifications such as: *‘leadership training’, ‘media training’, ‘public speaking’, ‘negotiation skills’* etc that this would help address the **lack of confidence** that prohibits female participation in NI politics.

A proper understanding by our current politicians on what **equality** means:

The ‘Gender Equality Strategy’ for Northern Ireland² recognises that:

‘treating men and women the same – that is being ‘gender neutral’ - is not the solution to eradicating gender inequality’ (p.15) and later:

‘treating men and women the same will not ensure equal outcomes because of the different experiences of women and men and the different economic and social positions occupied by them’³

Understanding this would make a dramatic impact on how decisions to engage women are made.

2 OFMDFM. A Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland 2006-2016. The Gender Equality Unit. 2006

3 Ibid

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

One participant in a focus group cited a public sector organisation that she currently works for as a good example of **flexible working hours**. There is:

- Agreement that everyone is willing to take on extra work when necessary
- An all women team
- Good leadership

It was agreed that **family friendly practices** of this type would encourage more women to get involved in local councils and the Assembly. Such family friendly practices as: paternity leave; working hours; job role and home working would all be beneficial.

Clear job role In the Scottish Assembly there is a clear job role which is outcome focussed rather than the situation here which is process focussed-attending meetings but no outcomes. It was felt a clear job role would help women see that it was a job they had the skills and experience to deliver on.

Positive Action Measures such as those used to achieve religious balance in the PSNI should be used to work towards gender balance in our political structures.

This worked too for the DPP's (now PCSP's)

Norway enforced Y3 critical mass

Dow Jones in the USA top companies must have a woman on the Board.

Boards of Industry given 5 years to address their gender balance.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

Shadowing

Gender Champions

- a. Youth Groups
- b. Training

Awareness raising with young women (need to see the relevance to their lives)

Women Caucuses

Women only lists (in some constituencies)

Quota System

Actively seeking out potential female candidates and supporting them. *Women are 50% of the population, we all have at least one very competent, capable woman who shaped our lives; it is lazy to state that there are not enough women of 'merit' putting themselves forward. They may not be putting themselves forward for the reasons outlined in Q 1 but they exist so Parties must find a way to actively seek them out and encourage and support them into politics.'*

Positive action Measures should be implemented even for a specific time period.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

N/A

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Job Roles: Criteria and Person Specifications

Quota System

Support System (Childcare, flexible working etc)

Gender Champions

Shadowing

Working with Community and schools to promote women and the role of women

Suggestion that training is a need for both women and men going into politics: there are currently no criteria for politicians so the current 'meritocracy' is basically the 'old boys' network'.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

Shadowing visits to other parliaments

Shadowing successful women e.g. in local councils

Setting up **Focus Groups**

Women's Networks

Funding for **best practice research** with community focus

Structural support

Political Leadership Programmes (e.g. Washington DC)

Training on equality for young men and women

Problem is that women need to fall in with party views which may be anti-quotas

There needs to be a gendered lens on any support systems and way of working

Media promotion of the positive role and contributions our female politicians are making.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

Quotes From our Focus Groups:

We all need to realise that women need to go into politics to bring about change

Some women don't know how to take the next step into politics

Women are the leaders in their local communities; most C/V organisations and initiatives are being led by women; they have the skills.

Politics needs to be on the career prospectus in schools and opportunities need to be provided for young women

The existing parties could promote women's role within their own party.

Not all the female politicians even recognise the barriers that other women face because they have the background, education and support that means they don't understand; this can be the most damaging of all.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

Short/medium/long term targets should be set for each initiative selected e.g.

Engaging the Women's Sector

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
Map the existing sector	Train 6 Groups of x12 women in Leadership Skills across NI in Year 1 and the same for Year 2	Aim to provide x12 opportunities for those who have completed Leadership Training to work shadow a female politician for e.g. a 4 week period
Organise focus groups to discuss initiatives that may work e.g. Leadership training	Organise a female politician guest speaker to present to each group	Have a dedicated concurrent Training support programme run by the women's sector and supported by the political parties leading to a 10% increase in female candidates

Engage the Women's Sector; the sector is very effective at engaging women which is a good place to start.

A **Civic Forum** could be an effective way to engage women in political life.

All new Council structures such as: Local Action Groups; Peace III/IV Partnerships; Community Planning Fora etc should be gender balanced. This would allow local women involved and interested in community activity to experience working at Board level with Councillors and observe the role of local Councillors. Women should be supported into these decision-making spaces and supported when on them through all the aforementioned barriers: travel, childcare. Flexibility etc.

Our members felt that it is imperative to address female representation and hope those reviewing this take on their views regarding the Impact of **Women's Under Representation** which are:

- **Lower Quality Decisions** – Greater participation from people of all backgrounds – genuine diversity at board level – means greater accountability and a more highly functioning democratic process.
- **A perpetuation** – Low level of female participation in any area of work has the effect of embedding and multiplying the problem of low female participation. Most obviously, it sends a message that certain jobs are not for women and limits the number of available female role models.

- **The multiplier effect** – Low levels of female participation has a multiplier effect which can undermine the attempts of some to achieve equal participation.
- **Lower representation groups** – Women from ethnic minority backgrounds and women with disabilities are just almost invisible at public and political level.

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

Contents

Section 1: Stakeholder Details and Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

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- Powers
- Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review.
- Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

Section 3: Background

- Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Section 4: Questions to consider

Section 5: Additional Information

Section 6: Contact Details

Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)	Telephone Number: 028 9038 0195 07442 498743			
Stakeholder Address	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)			
	Registered Political Party		Local Government	
	Academic		Government	
	Legislature		Non-Government	X
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public			

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP) was awarded UN Consultative Status in 1999.

The main aims of NIWEP are:

To capture the position of women in Northern Ireland and to ensure it is represented in international standards and mechanisms

To hold government accountable for working towards equality through meeting international standards.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

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Powers

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This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

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Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace" (Beijing Declaration, para 13, United Nations 1995).

Despite this high level declaration it has been difficult for women in Northern Ireland to enter politics. It is well documented that peace processes in conflict-affected states have

historically failed to include women or represent women's and girl's interests meaningfully. This has been the experience of Northern Ireland women in the post conflict processes and structures since the peace agreements of 1999 and 2007

Recently new evidence of the incomplete and continuing conflict can be seen in the reports from workshops held with women from across Northern Ireland by a project, Women and Peacebuilding: Sharing the Learning which aims to capture the experience of women during the conflict and the period of conflict resolution.² Women from some areas have reported:

- High levels of control (through fear and intimidation)
- Local women unable to speak up due to threat of property and personal security
- Women and their families living in fear and silence due to threat of reprisals³

This evidence is being echoed by what evidence is being gathered through the present inquiry⁴ into what positive actions have been implemented for Women since the Good Friday Agreement (ongoing) with barriers to participation in political life at community, local and regional levels

There is extensive evidence that women are not able to participate in community politics through fear and intimidation and therefore the natural progression to regional politics will not be realised unless the barriers to women's participation are addressed effectively.

Consequently women in Northern Ireland have little or no opportunity to influence and implement the decisions that are made about rebuilding their country and shaping their lives and those of their communities.

Other barriers to participation are the caring responsibilities taken by women. Lack of affordable, accessible and appropriate childcare restrict participation in political life. Meetings are held at times not conducive to those with caring responsibilities. However these barriers can easily be overcome through appropriate positive actions which promote gender equality

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Women must be able to articulate their voice, rights needs and preferences and political parties must hear their voice and act. They should be part of debates for constitution and electoral law, set safety rules for campaigns and all other issues.

To address the serious political constraints on women's political engagement, including the need for transforming political culture, providing political education and ensuring that campaign financing reaches women and that they are protected from backlash and measures are in place to combat gender based violence;

This can be done through: -

- Strengthening judiciary systems based on international judiciary accountability and constitutional change for gender and democracy;

² The Women's Resource and Development Agency, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland and the National Women's Council of Ireland are partners in the PEACE 3 funded project.

³ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/margaret-ward/excluded-and-silenced-women-in-northern-ireland-after-peace-process>

⁴ <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/May-2014/Briefing-from-All-party-Group-on-UNSCR-1325-Women-Peace-and-Security/>

- Providing guidelines for parties and support for election management bodies, and remove barriers for women to have access and share political power starting from manifestos to nomination procedures;
- Establishing effective financing mechanisms before women are nominated, especially internal financial systems;
- Holding all democratic institutions including local councils, political parties, women wings, and civil society, accountable to women, and for meeting commitments to women's rights.
- Developing capacity at different levels

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

Political Parties should have in place policies that ensure the following:-

- that provisions and measures in founding party documents to ensure women's representation in party structures and activities;
- transparent candidate recruitment and/or selection processes;
- clear and transparent promotion procedures;
- equal access to and distribution of party resources;
- Gender-sensitive party culture;
- institutional and regulatory frameworks that address discrimination against women and provide sufficient mechanisms to redress complaints.

This can be done through

- Institutionalizing gender equality within party structures, processes and practices
- Developing a party gender action plan
- Developing rules guaranteeing representation of women in party decision-making Bodies
- Adopting voluntary measures to support women's political advancement
- The use of women only short lists. There is legislation for this, but it is not being used.
- Provision of carers allowance to women and reorganising of meeting times to suit carers needs
- Attendance and priority at the All Party Groups on Gender related issues such as Women Peace and Security

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

(This box will expand as you type)

4. Question

What ‘positive actions’ would you recommend to increase women’s representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Women’s contribution to local community work needs to be recognized. The lack of women in political life means that gatekeepers of power remain male and they decide on projects and funding. Therefore women’s issues remain marginalized. The current levels of fear and intimidation that prevent women being involved in community politics also need to be addressed. Without a voice at local community level, women are less likely to become involved at regional level politics.

The use of quotas could be considered for decision making bodies.

CEDAW recommends the use of “special temporary measures” to improve women’s representation.

Aspects of the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement that haven’t been implemented are those that impact on Women – decision making, the Civic Forum and the Bill of Rights.

Womens

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

A recent Westminster Inquiry into Women in Parliament looked at three areas :

- Supply: Why do so few females wish to participate in electoral politics;
- Recruitment by parties and
- Retention of women who have stepped into the political arena.

The All Party Group recently published its results into an APPG Inquiry is to increase the numbers of women in Parliament. They recommended A Women and Equalities Select Committee tasked with the remit of addressing discrimination wherever it is found, including in Parliament as a way of selecting and retaining women in parliament. Such a body exists in many other Parliaments, frequently taking the form of a Committee or Women’s Caucus.

These suggestions could be used in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

(This box will expand as you type)

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

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The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
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Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

NUS-USI

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: NUS-USI	Telephone Number:		
Stakeholder Address NUS-USI 2nd Floor 42 Dublin Road Belfast BT2 7HN	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		
X			

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

NUS-USI works on matters relating to students in Northern Ireland and also works on equality matters and other policy relating to the organisation.

NUS-USI does not wish to be considered to provide oral evidence within this Review, and this paper covers NUS-USI’s key thoughts on the Review.

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 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above**. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
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- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

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The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

¹ http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

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Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

NUS-USI believes that there are significant barriers facing women regarding entering politics in Northern Ireland, and NUS-USI believes that it is extremely important that more women get involved in politics here. Any traditional aspects as regards politics in Northern Ireland could potentially be one of the barriers. Any tribalism and division in politics and society in Northern Ireland could be a very significant factor.

Issues which can contribute to barriers facing women, particularly with families, and men with families are possibly the anti-social hours of Assembly sittings and a potential lack of childcare facilities at the Assembly.

A lack of equality on some key issues in Northern Ireland can create a negative narrative and this could create potential barriers for women as regards politics in Northern Ireland. Negative narratives on equality issues could significantly dissuade people from becoming involved in politics.

A potential lack of compulsory positive action by the state or by political parties to encourage more women to get involved in politics could also be a barrier.

Any forms of sexism from the media could act as another significant deterrent as regards women getting involved in politics.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

The Labour Party in some other parts of the UK has used all-women shortlists in candidate selection in some constituencies.

Twinning can also be used and this matches one constituency with another, and one women and one man are selected for the constituencies. The Labour party used this for Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly elections in 1999.

Party list quotas have been used by Plaid Cymru and the Conservative Party, and with this system parties can choose that a certain percentage of candidates on their list will be women.

In the Republic of Ireland, legislation has been passed as regards gender quota at the next general election.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

Political parties could potentially create quotas in relation to election candidates or people contesting selection contests to be a candidate or an elected representative.

Political parties should also pro-actively create strategies to engage with and encourage women to get involved in politics and stand for election. Political parties could also employ or designate a staff member as an equality officer to potentially lead this extremely important work.

Political parties could also create a women's committee or women's network within their party. This committee should consist only of women and be a forum where women can raise issues around potential barriers to politics and to discuss initiatives to get more women involved in politics.

Political parties could also create mentoring schemes so that women who are elected representatives or senior staff or senior members of the party can act as a mentor to women who have recently joined the party or are considering standing for election. NUS-USI believes that it is vitally important that parties act to encourage more women to get involved politics.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

(This box will expand as you type)

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

In terms of positive action, parties should create quotas in terms of women candidates for election, possibly 50% women, 50% others as this could significantly increase diversity.

Another positive action that parties could take might be around creating a quota in terms of ministerial appointments and Assembly Committee Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson posts.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

NUS-USI would advocate that political parties should ensure that their appointments to ministerial posts and Assembly Committee Chair and Deputy Chair positions are allocated to ensure a fair gender balance across parties.

Parties should also have a fair gender balance in their appointments of posts involving Councillors in Councils and Council Committees and where possible in other elected institutions.

The Northern Ireland Executive should also create strategy to try and increase the number of women in leadership and in politics in Northern Ireland.

Research should be commissioned by the Northern Ireland Executive into potential barriers and factors as regards women getting involved in politics. The research could also examine any possible changes needed to try and ensure a fair gender balance in politics.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

Childcare facilities for MLAs and party staff as well as Assembly staff should be made available for both women and men at the Assembly.

The Assembly should consider ensuring Assembly sittings finish at 6pm. This will ensure that people with children, both men and women, have working hours that involve less late night work.

The Assembly could run outreach programmes around Northern Ireland specifically to engage with women and encourage women to get involved in politics. This programme could give women the opportunity to talk to MLAs in their area directly at events and raise potential barriers to involvement in politics as well as discussing other matters. Having a forum like this where women can talk to and hear from women who are involved politics could make a very positive impact in encouraging women to become involved in political life.

The Assembly could create bursaries for women to receive a paid work placement for a few months with a political party, and this insight could encourage greater participation in politics.

NUS-USI would also encourage the Assembly to examine policies and legislation that has gone through or is going through the Assembly to ensure that there is gender equality in all the work of and policies of the Assembly. The Assembly should also take a very strong approach against on any behaviour or remarks that go against gender equality at the Assembly.

It is very important that the Assembly ensures that there is a culture of equality and encouragement to ensure that diversity in politics can be promoted as effectively as possible.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Professor Yvonne Galligan

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder ‘Call for Evidence’ Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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- Powers
- Assembly and Executive Review Committee’s Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review.
- Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

Section 3: Background

- Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Section 4: Questions to consider

Section 5: Additional Information

Section 6: Contact Details

Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Professor Yvonne Galligan	Telephone Number: 02891875868		
Stakeholder Address	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic	X	Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

I am a professor of comparative politics at Queen’s University Belfast, and Director of the Centre for Advancement of Women in Politics there. I have studied and published on comparative women’s political behaviour, representation and political institutions.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
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Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

The classical identification of barriers to women’s political participation and representation are usually described as the 5 C’s – cash, confidence, childcare, culture and candidate selection.² Although analytically distinct, they interact with each other to distort the opportunities for women with ambitions to enter political life.

Other analyses describe the challenges/barriers as being of an individual, societal, or political kind. The individual challenges may have to do with personal sense of confidence in taking part in politics, with all of its attendant consequences for personal privacy, financial costs, time demands, and family life. Societal challenges indicate the extent to which women are expected by social norms to take the major responsibility for parenthood and other caring duties.

Engaging in political life may be seen as not compatible with these social expectations. Political barriers generally relate to candidate selection processes, the way in which an electoral system determines party strategy and voter behaviour, constituency size, and other

² Kenworthy, Lane and Melissa Malami (1999), Gender inequality in political representation: a worldwide comparative analysis, *Social Forces* 78:1, pp. 235-269.

features of the political system that influences the choices of parties and voters. It is well known, for example, that a first past the post electoral system, in single member districts, strongly favours the selection of men as candidates, while interchanging women and men on party lists in PR list systems delivers more gender-equal outcomes.

These different ways of looking at the challenges/barriers to women's prospects for entering politics are compatible. They can be applied to women's political opportunities in Northern Ireland, as in other contexts.

Since 1998, women's employment rate has grown, recovering strongly from the economic downturn of the mid 2000's (1998-60%; 2014-64%), while that of men has fluctuated but returned to 1998 levels (1998-73%; 2014-73%).³ These general statistics hide gender differences in labour-force participation, with over one third (37%) of women in work holding part-time positions in 2014, compared with 8% of employed men.⁴ These general trends indicate that there is a strong pressure on women in NI to fulfil traditional caring roles, as evidenced by the fact that 68% of women working part-time said that they did so because they 'did not want a full-time job', while 35% of men gave this explanation.⁵ This broad cultural norm – that women combine work and family responsibilities - feeds into political and public life, skewing some women's expectations of participation (individual), cultural perceptions of what constitutes a politician (societal), and party selection options (political). While cultural norms are slow to change, behavioural change can be prompted by legislation, voluntary party commitment, focused actions, and the highlighting of role models. The institutional environment, too, plays a part in surmounting the challenge of women's under-representation in public and political life. These points are discussed further on in this submission.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

In recent years, women's under-representation in political life has been taken to indicate a deficiency in the working of democratic politics. Recent research of other parliamentary arenas has shown that when women are part of a parliament in sufficient numbers (a 'critical mass' of at least 30%), then the issues brought to legislative scrutiny expand to include 'women's' interests (MacDonald and O'Brien 2011; Chaney 2012, Childs and Krook 2009).⁶ Quite some attention, then, has been paid by civil society groups and by political parties to initiatives to encourage more women to opt for politics. While legislated (mandatory) and voluntary quota mechanisms (and these vary in form depending on the electoral system) have been found to effectively increase women's representation, this measure cannot exist successfully in isolation from other supporting initiatives.

If the political gender gap is to be closed, or at least reduced, women must be willing to run for election. One way of stimulating women's political ambitions is to profile female politicians as role models. This has been found to be an effective stimulus to women's greater interest in, and attachment to, politics. Wolbrecht and Campbell (2007: 936) found this to be so in their extensive study of women's political interest in European countries. They found that;

3 NISRA (2014a) Labour Market Statistics Press Release 13 August, p. 5; NISRA (1998) Labour Market Bulletin 12, p. 60. The employment rate is calculated as being the proportion of people of working age who are employed.

4 NISRA (2014b) Labour Market Bulletin 24, p. 18.

5 NISRA (2014b), p. 19.

6 MacDonald, Jason A and Erin E. O'Brien (2011) 'Quasi-experimental design, constituency and advancing women's interests: Re-examining the influence of gender on substantive representation', *Political Research Quarterly* 64:2, 472-486; Chaney, Paul (2012) 'Critical actors vs critical mass: The substantive representation of women in the Scottish Parliament', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 14:3, 441-457; Childs, Sarah and Mona Lena Krook (2009), *Analysing women's substantive representation: from critical mass to critical actors*, *Government and Opposition* 44:2, 125-145

*female politicians in democratic nations do function as true role models, inspiring women and girls to be politically active themselves. Women of all ages are more likely to discuss politics, and younger women become more politically active, when there are more women in parliament.*⁷

New research (Gilardi 2014), drawing on the experience of municipal elections in Switzerland shows that this strategy is particularly effective in the early stages of addressing the political gender imbalance.⁸

This is an initiative that is well within the capacity of the NI Assembly Education and Outreach service to undertake, if not already doing so.

Raising women's and girls' interest in political affairs is one step, and needs to be capitalised on to convert interest and political activity into an ambition to become an elected representative. In this regard, various mentoring programmes that demystify politics, provide women with the skills to run political campaigns, and bring their ambitions to the attention of party officials are useful. and not to rule out the adoption of such initiatives, as their cumulative effect can be to normalise women's political participation, raise individual women's ambitions to be representatives, and contribute to a more diverse body of legislators. Mentoring programmes have grown in popularity over the past 5 years, and among some recent examples are the Edmonton city council 'Opening the Potential' mentoring programme for women between the ages of 22 and 40 interested in municipal politics⁹; the Fabian Women's Network programme¹⁰ and the social entrepreneurial Women for Election programme that has successfully guided many women to candidacies in the Republic of Ireland.¹¹ These programmes successfully mobilise women in wider civil society to consider political careers, to join political parties, and to develop the skills required for campaigning.

A mentoring initiative could be jointly undertaken by the Assembly, a women's civil society organisation, and/or a relevant academic unit.

Another significant arena in which initiatives can take place to encourage and increase women's political participation and representation is that of the Assembly. Being an elected representative is about undertaking a job of work on behalf of the citizens, and the Assembly is the place in which that work is carried out. Like any organisation, the written and unwritten rules, customs and practices influence the manner in which the work of the institution is carried out. Much attention has been given to examining the gendered nature of organisations (a common research strand in corporate organisations, and becoming increasingly important in higher education and higher professional bodies and institutions), with gender audits revealing and addressing gendered needs and interests, and benefits accruing for women and men, and the organisation as a whole. Attention has now turned to parliaments/ legislatures as gendered institutional environments, bringing to light the gendered behaviour, practices, and rules that govern the working of parliaments.¹² It examines the institutional conditions in which parliamentary 'critical actors' can effect policy changes that lead to higher levels of equality in society. Thus, this research, known as feminist institutionalism, takes the legislative setting as a vital contextual factor in facilitating policy change and studies

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- 7 Wolbrecht, Christina and David E. Campbell (2007) 'Leading by Example: Female Members of Parliament as political role models', *American Journal of Political Science* 51:4, pp. 921-939
 - 8 Gilardi, Fabrizio (2014) 'The temporary importance of role models for women's political participation', *American Journal of Political Science* (forthcoming).
 - 9 http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/city_organization/opening-the-potential-mentoring-for-women.aspx (accessed 25 August 2014);
 - 10 <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/19/mentoring-women-key-gates-power> and <http://fabianwomen.org.uk/mentoring/> (accessed 25 August 2014);
 - 11 <http://www.womenforelection.ie/about-us/> ((accessed 25 August 2014)
 - 12 Holli, Anne Maria (2012) Does gender have an effect on the selection of experts by parliamentary standing committees?, *Politics & Gender* 8, pp. 341-366; Mackay, Fiona (2008) "Thick" conceptions of substantive representation: Women, gender and political institutions, *Representation* 44(2), pp. 125-139.
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the behaviour of critical actors within that context.¹³ In parallel to this research, there is a new wave of reflection on the working of elected institutions arising from the increasing presence of women in parliaments. This practice-based assessment questions some of the customary traditions, practices and behaviours found in elected institutions. This has led to legislative assemblies being seen by some representatives as gendered institutions. In coming to this conclusion, they concur with academic research, though their evaluation stems from an experiential knowledge of parliament rather than from a theoretical perspective.

Following the line of thinking that parliaments are gendered institutions, international studies have introduced the idea of 'gender-sensitive' parliaments. The Interparliamentary Union, an early leader in developing this idea, and has adopted a definition of a gender-sensitive parliament that is now widely accepted, as follows:

...a parliament that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and in its work. Gender-sensitive parliaments remove the barriers to women's full participation and offer a positive example, or model, to society at large. They ensure that their operations and resources are used effectively towards promoting gender equality.¹⁴

Lena Wängnerud (2013) argues that gender-sensitive parliaments have distinctive characteristics in three related spheres:

- there is implementation of equal opportunities for women and men to influence internal parliamentary working procedures;
- there is generous space for women's interests and concerns on the parliamentary agenda; and
- the outcome of parliamentary debate is the production of gender-sensitive legislation.¹⁵

The opposite of these gender-sensitive principles, Wängnerud notes, is when a parliament is fully patriarchal and elected women are systematically discriminated against; there is no space for the raising and discussion of women's interests and concerns; and the parliament reproduces gender-based power structures.¹⁶ Many of the research documents on the subject of gender-sensitive parliaments address the three categories identified by Wängnerud, and treat them as areas for action.¹⁷ This paper draws on these documents and related academic research to give an overview of practices in other legislatures with a view to informing discussion on gender-sensitive practices in the NI Assembly.

Internal parliamentary working procedures

When it comes to considering elected chambers as 'gendered institutions', one of the first areas of focus is that of working practices and how these impact on women's and men's lives. These working practices have been the subject of academic comment, along with constituting an aspect of parliamentary reform.¹⁸ Along with academic observations, elected women repeatedly identify maternity, paternity and caring leave as issues that elected bodies

13 Krook, Mona Lena and Fiona Mackay (2011), *Gender, Politics and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

14 Interparliamentary Union (2012), *Plan of Action for Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, IPU, Geneva, p. 8, available at www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/action-gender-e.pdf (accessed 9 June 2014). See also Palmieri, Sonia (2011) *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: a Global Review of Good Practice*, IPU, Geneva, p. 6.

15 Wängnerud Lena (2013) 'Beyond Presence: the principles of gender-sensitive parliaments', paper presented at 2013 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 29-Sept 1.

16 Wängnerud, p. 13

17 See, e.g. National Women's Council of Ireland (2014) *A Parliament of all Talents: Building a Women-friendly Oireachtas*, Dublin: NWCI.

18 House of Commons Speakers Conference (on Parliamentary Representation) (2010) *Final Report*, London: Stationery Office; Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (2013), *Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians*, London: CPA.

have not addressed in a systematic manner.¹⁹ Some men, too, find the restrictive practices of legislatures a real hindrance to their balancing work and family life especially around times of childbirth and paternity, and when they have long-term caring commitments. There are some good practice initiatives, though, that assist parliamentarians (women and men) to reconcile their political and family obligations, as follows:

Changes to **parliamentary working times** in order to accommodate the balancing of work and family responsibilities is a common reform in assemblies wishing to institute a more gender-sensitive approach. This was a consideration in the creation of the Scottish Parliament and NI Assembly, and was extensively discussed in the House of Commons Speakers Conference Report.²⁰ Adjournments are now aligned with the school calendar in the Scottish Parliament and Northern Ireland Assembly, similar to the practice in the Canadian Federal Parliament. The IPU reports that 39% of parliaments have their recesses aligned with the school calendar, and that 22% have discontinued night sittings.²¹

The facility for **proxy voting** is seen as a family-friendly reform, but not widely practiced. Yet, proxy voting could be a mechanism to facilitate the participation of women representatives absent for maternity reasons, or women and men absent due to illness or defined family responsibilities. New Zealand instituted proxy voting in 1996, as an alternative to pairing. A member who cannot be present in the Chamber gives authority to another member to cast a vote in his/her name. The Speaker decides on disputes over proxies.²² The Australian parliament introduced proxy voting for MPs who are nursing mothers, with chief whips casting a vote on behalf of the absent mother. In some parliaments, pairs can be provided for nursing mothers and in others (such as the European Parliament) babies are permitted on the floor of the chamber.²³ Proxy voting could be extended to male MPs as fathers-to-be, to enable them attend the birth of their child and take paternity leave.

Childcare provision is an institutional measure that can support MPs and parliamentary staff. Increasingly, this facility is being introduced into parliaments. The Canadian federal parliament is an example. It provides onsite daycare with spaces for about 30 children between 18 months and 5 years.²⁴ In 2006, a childcare facility opened for members and staff of Leinster House and the following year was extended to staff working in nearby government departments.²⁵ However, the provision of childcare alone will not deliver a gender-sensitive parliament. It needs to be part of a more all-encompassing initiative that seeks to address the predominantly male-gendered culture of legislative bodies.

In addition to addressing family responsibilities, academic and practitioner studies indicate that legislative bodies are arenas in which sexual harassment is prevalent – with both women and men experiencing this abuse of power.²⁶ Policies on combatting sexual harassment assist in the creation of a respectful, inclusive and safe workplace, a matter relevant to parliaments as well as to other workplaces. The Canadian Federal Senate and House, for example, have policies and procedures for the prevention and resolution of harassment in the workplace applicable to all who work in parliament buildings, including volunteers and temporary workers.²⁷

19 Marx, Jutta and Jutta Börner (2011), *Gender Mainstreaming in Latin American Parliaments: A work in progress*, Lima: IPU and IDEA; House of Commons Speakers Conference, paras 264-274.

20 House of Commons Speakers Conference, paras 275-286.

21 Barnes, Andre and Lauren Munn-Rivard (2013), *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: 1. Advancements in the Workplace*, Library of Parliament, Ottawa, p. 2

22 http://www.parliament.nz/en-nz/about-parliament/how-parliament-works/ppnz/00H000CPPNZ_171/chapter-17-termination-of-debate#_Toc263861154 (accessed 9 June 2014).

23 Commonwealth Parliamentary Whips Network (2010), *Report to Commonwealth Parliamentary Association*.

24 Barnes and Munn-Rivard, p. 3

25 Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (2006), *Annual Report 2006*, Dublin: Houses of the Oireachtas, p. 31.

26 Channel 4 News investigation, *Sexual harassment culture in parliament exposed*, 10 April 2014

27 Barnes and Munn-Rivard, p. 4

The parliament is also a working environment for professional administrative staff, and a 2012 survey by the European Parliament of national parliaments revealed that most did not have a specific programme to encourage **equality between women and men in senior management positions in parliaments**. There are exceptions, as the following examples illustrate:

Finland: The Parliamentary Office equality plan for 2010-11 included targets and practical actions to achieve a gender distribution of at least 40% of women and men in all positions, including senior management, in the parliament.

Germany (Bundestag): the parliamentary Plan for Equality, 2010-2014 has the target of reaching 50% of women in all positions;

The **Dutch parliament** signed a voluntary public code, “Talent to the Top” Charter, containing clear agreements on the realisation of gender diversity in senior management, with annual reporting on progress submitted to the Talent to the Top Monitoring Commission.

Space for women’s interests and concerns on the parliamentary agenda

A scan of the literature reveals a range of informal and formal arrangements that provide space for discussion of women’s interests, concerns, raise awareness of the gendered nature of public policies, and provide an input into legislative deliberation. A common mechanism for this process is the creation of women’s parliamentary caucuses. In an IPU survey in 2008, almost half of the 77 parliaments surveyed had instituted women’s caucuses.²⁸ A recent study by Sonia Palmieri for the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) focused on the prevalence of women’s caucuses in Europe, particularly OSCE countries. It found that women parliamentarians reported many advantages in having a network of this kind. These include promoting women’s numerical and substantive representation, highlighting the importance of gender issues within parliamentary deliberations, and ensuring that gender equality issues are mainstreamed into legislative decision-making.²⁹ The survey also highlighted the obstacles to the creation and sustainability of these informal arrangements. The challenges relate to lack of resources, undefined or unclear relationship to parliamentary structures (especially parliamentary committees), and discriminatory cultural and institutional values in favour of men. Political polarisation of the parliament was among the most difficult of obstacles to overcome, as it was found to inhibit consensus-building on a common agenda among women representatives. Nonetheless, the report provides an 8-step plan for the creation of a women’s parliamentary caucus as follows:

1. Initiate broad consultations
2. Outline common goals and objectives
3. Identify resources
4. Define the structure
5. Agree on activities
6. Build relationships
7. Engage in outreach
8. Assess progress³⁰

This report contains many interesting examples of the opportunities and obstacles to the creation and maintenance of a women’s parliamentary network or caucus. Among the case studies, three are of particular relevance to the NI Assembly: Sweden, Poland and Kosovo. The **Speakers Reference Group of the Swedish Parliament** has no formal powers, but is

28 Barnes and Munn-Rivard, p. 5

29 Palmieri, Sonia (2013) A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region, Warsaw: ODIHR, pp. 17-19.

30 A more detailed discussion of the elements of this 8-step plan can be found in the study.

a forum for raising awareness on gender equality within parliament. Its purpose is spelled out in the *Gender Equality Action Plan of the Swedish Parliament 2010–2014*, in which the Reference Group is recognized as a key focal point of the Riksdag for promoting gender equality. The body is provided with a gender secretariat comprised of two parliamentary staff (civil servants) with gender expertise who are responsible for research and administrative support. The Group has its own budget provided by the Parliament. It undertakes three main sets of activities: arranging seminars and workshops in the field of gender equality for parliamentarians, party officials and parliament staff members; arranging a large public seminar on the topic of gender equality on a regular basis; and conducting additional activities, including support to MPs on issues pertaining to gender equality. It also meets with foreign delegations to discuss its activities and share practices.

The **Polish Parliamentary Group of Women MPs** re-established in 2012, is a cross-party grouping of about 50 MPs and has close ties with the Polish women's movement. It collaborated with women's civil society groups on the issue of women's political representation, leading to modifications of the electoral code in 2011 to equalise the opportunities for candidacies between women and men. Thus, the electoral code now guarantees women and men 35% of the positions each on electoral lists.

The **Women's Caucus of the Assembly of Kosovo** was created in 2005 and comprises all women MPs as members. Although it is not formally recognised by the Assembly, the caucus operates in a highly structured manner. Its 7-member board represents the seven political groups in the Assembly, meets on a monthly basis and is administratively supported by an assistant provided by the Assembly. The caucus has developed a strong degree of cooperation with the committees and with the Speaker, has adopted a Strategic Action Plan and drafts an annual Action Plan in close consultation with civil society and international organisations. In 2012 the Caucus focused on devising and presenting reforms to the rules of procedure of the Assembly in addition to raising awareness on women's health issues in parliament and among the wider public, in cooperation with the ministry of health.

In addition, the aims of the recently-formed **Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP)** explicitly seek to increase women's parliamentary representation and participation as one of a number of gender-sensitive objectives for the 2013-17 period. To that end

*Members emphasized the adoption and implementation of mechanisms to advance women's effective participation, by considering affirmative action policies, including quotas, constitutional, legislative, electoral and political party reforms. Members further acknowledged the importance of a gender-sensitive Parliament; increased roles of women as Presiding Officers, heading parliamentary committees; rotation of leadership positions such as Chief Whip, Minority/Majority Leader(s); mentoring and shadow leadership; and encouraging debate on gender as a cross-cutting issue and gender responsive budgeting. They also recognized the need for developing the capacity of women once elected to Parliament, the need to strengthen national women's machineries, the need for building links with civil society, and the need to encourage mentoring.*³¹

Annual CPW conferences have addressed a number of aspects regarding increasing women's political participation in addition to gender-related issues, and networking.

The production of gender-sensitive legislation

The concept of gender mainstreaming, developed in the mid-1990s, sees gender equality as a process rather than an isolated project. Since this time, much research has taken

31

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (2013), *Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians*, London: CPA, p. 8

place around the term, its meaning and its application to policy.³² As McNutt notes, it is ‘an integrated policy strategy with specific policy instruments (gender-based analysis, gender budgeting, accountability mechanisms, and critical engagement procedures) co-ordinated across government departments and agencies’.³³ Increasingly gender mainstreaming has come into parliamentary scrutiny of government policies, and is seen as a tool for enhancing the delivery of gender-sensitive public policies.³⁴ In 2011, the European Parliament passed a motion in which it

*Commits itself to regularly adopting and implementing a policy plan for gender mainstreaming in Parliament with the overall objective of promoting equality between women and men through the genuine and effective incorporation of the gender perspective into all policies and activities, so that the different impact of measures on women and on men is assessed, existing initiatives are coordinated, and objectives and priorities, as well as the means of achieving them, are specified*³⁵

A considerable amount of parliamentary work takes place in committees, which provide an arena for deliberating on many aspects of a policy issue. An analysis of women’s committee membership can indicate a replication of the gendered division of labour found in society or generally. Indeed, there is now much evidence to show that women generally serve on committees dealing with health, education, social and youth affairs while men dominate economic, financial, security and foreign policy committees. Eileen Connolly makes a general point in a study of the Oireachtas that ‘gender stereotyping in [committee] portfolio allocation is a very visible aspect of a ‘masculine culture’ in parliament as it confines women to a narrow range of political roles and excludes them for the most part from the most influential political positions’.³⁶ Thus, the distribution of women members on parliamentary committees can influence the extent to which gender issues are addressed in the course of committee business.

The procedural arrangements for raising and discussing gender equality issues also merits attention. Many parliaments have a gender equality committee that provides a focal point for raising gender interests, offers a channel for women’s civil society to contribute to parliamentary issues, and can provide gender expertise to other legislative committees. Many gender equality committees adopt a gender-based analysis of legislation, highlighting the different impacts of policy on women and men, and identify areas of potential amendment that would contribute to the wider goal of achieving gender equality. In 2005, the Canadian House of Commons Standing Committee on the Status of Women published a report *Gender-Based Analysis: Building Blocks for Success* that ‘recommended the initiation of consultations aimed at “the development of legislation that would ensure the systematic application of genderbased analysis to all ... federal policy and program activities.”’³⁷ However, when committees other than the Status of Women Committee review legislation they do not regularly consider the gender equality dimension. Thus, in the Canadian parliament

32 Pollock, Mark A. and Emilie Hafner-Burton (2000), *Mainstreaming gender in the European Union*, *Journal of European Public Policy* 7:3, pp. 432-456; Elson, Diane (2002) *Gender responsive budget initiatives: Some key dimensions and practical examples*, Paper presented at the conference on Gender Budgets, Financial Markets, Financing for Development, Heinrich Boell Foundation, Berlin; McNutt, Kathleen (2010) *An integrated approach to gender equality: From gender-based analysis to gender mainstreaming*, JSGS Working Paper Series.

33 McNutt, p. 2.

34 UNDP (2004), *Developing capacity for gender-sensitive parliament: A gender mainstreaming strategy for the National Assembly [of Laos]*, UNDP Project LAO/02/M01; European Parliament (2014), *Gender mainstreaming in committees and delegations of the European Parliament: a study for the FEMM Committee*, EP: Brussels.

35 Motion for a European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament, 2011 (2011/2151 INI)

36 Connolly, Eileen (2013) ‘Parliaments as Gendered Institutions: the Irish Oireachtas’, *Irish Political Studies* 28: 3, p. 361. See also European Parliament (2012), *Gender Equality: what do parliaments of the European Union do – an exchange of best practices*, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/webnp/cms/pid/1925> (accessed 8 June 2014)

37 Munn-Rivard, Laura (2013) *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: 2. The Work of Legislators*, Ottawa: Library of Parliament Publications, p. 3.

(as is the case in many other legislatures), there is no systematic application of a gender-based analysis of public policy.³⁸ **Gender-sensitive budgeting**, however, is becoming a more widespread practice. It is defined as:

*an approach that aims to mainstream gender in economic policy-making and seeks to transform the entire budgetary process. Gender budgeting refers not only to expenditures earmarked for women, but also to an analysis of the entire budget from a gender perspective, including security, health, education, public works, and so on, to ensure that the allocations and resulting impacts respond to the needs of both women and men*³⁹

However, Palmieri notes that many gender-sensitive budgeting initiatives are undertaken as pilot exercises, but are not sustained thereafter. The Canadian Status of Women Committee recommended in 2008 that the Canadian government resource the capacity of the Status of Women Canada to provide gender-responsive analysis to the government.⁴⁰ In contrast, the Gender Equality Committee of the Mexican parliament attaches to each federal budget a disaggregation by sex of the public expenditure.⁴¹ In Scotland, the independent Equality and Budget Advisory Group (EBAG) made up of government and civil society actors, works with the Scottish Government to:

*Provide advice and support for the mainstreaming of equality in policy with the appropriate allocation of resources; Contribute to mapping the pathway between evidence, policy and spend; Improve the presentation of equality information in the Scottish budget documents; Contribute to improved commitment to and awareness of mainstreaming equality in to policy and budget processes*⁴²

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

Political parties, too, have a role to play in equalising opportunities for women's participation. Many parties across the world have taken voluntary measures to do so, through (for example) target-setting for internal leadership positions at multiple levels, and candidate gender balance, as well as support for women-specific networks, and dedicated training including mentoring programmes. These measures are effective when party leadership actively supports and commits to this change agenda, which in turn contributes to a change in the culture of a party towards the acceptance of women in representative roles. Recent research from Canada highlights the informal environment in which candidate selection takes place: the gender of party leaders at the level at which candidates are selected plays a significant role in determining if women get through the selection process (Cheng and Tavits).⁴³ There is a pointer here for political parties – auditing the gender composition of constituency chairpersons and taking measures to ensure that the leaders of the party at local/constituency level are gender-balanced. It is at this point (among others) that the role model dimension comes into play: as Cheng and Tavits observe 'female (male) party leaders may not just prefer but actually do support the nomination of female (male) party candidates'⁴⁴, women party leaders are more likely to support potential women candidates in other ways too, such as mentoring. This is a point that the parties represented in the Assembly may wish to consider in the context of reviewing the adoption, implementation and working of

38 Munn-Rivard, p. 3

39 Palmieri, 2011, p. 6

40 Munn-Rivard, p.5.

41 Marx and Borner, p. 40.

42 Equality Budgeting in Focus: the Scottish Model, available at <http://equalitybudgeting.ie/index.php/publicationsresources-2/equality-budgeting-in-focus-the-scottish-model/> (accessed 15 June 2014).

43 Cheng, Christine and Magrit Tavits (2011) 'Informal influences in selecting female political candidates', Political Research Quarterly 64:2, pp. 460-471.

44 Cheng and Tavits, p. 467.

mechanisms available to parties to encourage and support women's candidacies (such as mentoring, having a gender-balance policy on seat vacancies, selections and co-options, making selection rules and procedures transparent and readily accessible to party members, women's networks and supports, dedicated funding for women candidates to aid with caring responsibilities during campaigns, and a family leave provision in place to assist women and men representatives with parenthood and long-term caring responsibilities). It is also important that initiatives designed to increase women's candidacies are widely known and extensively promoted within a party, are given strong positive support by the party leadership, and are communicated to supporters.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

(This box will expand as you type)

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

See (6) below.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

- Recognising women already active in the political arena as role models (see below);
- Attention to the cultural norms of policy, behaviour and practice in the Assembly (see below)
- Raising public awareness, through an Assembly inquiry, on sexism in the media, and measures to combat it
- Ensuring that women politicians are presented as party spokespersons in news and current affairs programmes as often as men
- Establishing a working party on a gender-sensitive parliament, with equal membership of women and men politicians and parliamentary staff, chaired by the Speaker (see below)
- During Parliament Week (November each year) and International Women's Day/Week (March each year), that at least one event or occasion be organised that draws attention to women politicians. One could be a networking event, enabling women politicians and women in leading positions in Northern Ireland network together, share the challenges of leadership, and support one another's endeavours. The event could be organised by the Assembly in partnership with one or more leading women's organisations from business, civil society, the professions, and academia.
- Developing cross-parliamentary networks with women in other legislatures on these islands and utilising the global parliamentary networks to which the Assembly has access to foster women MLAs active participation in these networks
- Ensuring that all official delegations from the Assembly to other parliaments and on legislative business outside of Northern Ireland are gender balanced, and that no delegation is composed of one female representative.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

Elected assemblies can do much to foster and promote women's political participation. This is also the case for the Northern Ireland Assembly. As a first step to progressing this issue, the AERC may wish to commission further research to **consider where the Assembly stands in relation to the three aspects of a gendered institution:**

- Are there opportunities for women and men to address Assembly working procedures with a view to making these procedures more gender-sensitive?
- What space is there in Assembly business for the consideration of women's interests and concerns?
- Does the outcome of Assembly debates promote and secure gender-sensitive legislation?

These questions can support the development of an **Action Plan** in which specific features of the Assembly as a gender-sensitive working environment for representatives and parliamentary staff are identified and pursued. Another starting point for this conversation could be the compilation of a **gender audit** which examines standing orders, rules and regulations, training plans, and maps the gender participation among all staff grades and among MLAs to identify problems for resolution. These questions can also support the production of **gender-sensitive public policy**, to the benefit of all inhabitants of Northern Ireland.

An **institutional context** for considering these questions is required. In this regard there seems to be merit in having a discussion between the Assembly and Executive Review Committee, the OFMDFM Committee, and the All Party Group on UNSCR 1325 on identifying a suitable and effective forum in the Assembly for addressing the issues raised by the three questions above.

As a **place of employment**, the Assembly should be a role model in best practice across Northern Ireland, these islands, and beyond. Designing and implementing positive policies and codes of conduct on workplace issues such as promotion, sexual harassment, maternal/parental leave, and work-life reconciliation policies for MLAs would make an important contribution to creating a gender-sensitive culture in the Assembly.

There is scope for **gender mainstreaming Committee business**, so that outputs are gender-sensitive. As the evidence shows, women's cross-parliamentary networks – of which supportive parliamentary men can be members should the women members wish – serve as a vehicle for advancing representation, and gender-related issues. A **network of MLAs committed to advancing gender equality**, and equal opportunities, would have a significant role in raising awareness among MLAs and parliamentary staff of the importance of considering the gendered nature and effects of public policy.

The **Assembly's support service** can play an important role in developing this capacity to evaluate public policy along gender dimensions. This can be done as part of the **induction of new MLAs, and as ongoing development and capacity-building programmes**. One specific policy arena for this focus could be on raising MLA and parliamentary support staff awareness of the gendered nature of all political business, and including policy development. There is also scope for skill development, such as capacity to provide and appreciate a gendered evaluation of the budget. There is expertise in the women's sector on this issue through the Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group that could assist the Assembly's support service in providing capacity-building for MLAs in applying gender-sensitive analysis to the budget. There are also lessons to be learned from the experience of gender budgeting in Scotland.⁴⁵

45

Angela O'Hagan, Gender budgeting in Europe: A sustainable route to policy change?, Paper for PSA Northern Postgraduate Conference, 6 June 2008

In addition, the Assembly Education and Outreach Service can intensify its comprehensive work programme with a specific focus on raising the interest and engagement of women and girls in politics. This can be done through an **active promotion of women politicians as role models, and through the development of a mentoring scheme for women and girls with political ambitions.**

Finally, **the Assembly should consider how it can support parties in giving strong effect to the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act, and the provisions it contains for gender-balancing candidates so that the voters are given gender as well as party choices.**

This also applies to local council elections, and consideration should be given there to the introduction of candidate gender balance provisions, legislation for which is in the remit of the Assembly. Additionally, Assembly consideration of this matter could include examining the options of inserting a gender equality clause in the Northern Ireland Act in relation to elections to the Assembly. The experience of the operation of the relatively new candidate gender balance law in Ireland and that of other countries with candidate gender balance laws could provide useful information.

Adopting these, or similar, measures will enhance the participation of women in the work of the Assembly, will support the Assembly and Executive's responsiveness to gender equality as a public policy issue, will raise the profile of the Assembly among the public on gender and politics matters, and will contribute to making the Assembly a more attractive place for women and men to pursue careers as elected representatives and parliamentary staff.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Training for Women Network (TWN)

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: XXXX	Telephone Number: 028 9031 9888		
Stakeholder Address Unit 10B Weavers Court Linfield Road Belfast BT12 5GH	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		X

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

Established in 1996, Training for Women Network (TWN) is Northern Ireland's leading network for the promotion of women's training and development, through policy, training, networking and education.

TWN is ideally placed as a first stop shop for women in Northern Ireland seeking information on training, development and entrepreneurship. TWN is one of the largest networks in Northern Ireland with a membership that encompasses a wide variety of groups, individuals

and organisations from the public, private and voluntary/community sectors. TWN's activities seek to encourage women to look at opportunities for advancement in a variety of ways.

TWN is a non-profit organisation which aims:

- To advance, promote, develop and co-ordinate provision of accessible, high quality vocational and pre-vocational education and training for women in Northern Ireland leading to sustainable employment.
- To facilitate vertical and horizontal integration of women in the labour market.
- To provide a range of services to members and promote good practice in training for women.
- To encourage and empower women to take up leadership roles and become involved in decision making in public and professional life.

TWN is especially keen to support actions that will:

- Breakdown barriers to training and employment for women.
- Introduce innovative pilot projects which others can emulate.
- Help women gain access to occupations in which they have traditionally been under represented.
- Assist women in vulnerable and declining employment sectors to re-train themselves for potential employment.
- Promote accredited training projects to help women progress in their chosen career.

TWN currently holds Special Consultative Status within the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN. This status enables TWN to actively engage with ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies, as well as with the United Nations Secretariat, programmes, funds and agencies in a number of ways including:

- Providing expert information to the Council when requested
- Knowledge of the provisional agenda of ECOSOC
- Place items on the provisional agenda
- Attend ECOSOC meetings
- Submit written statements to ECOSOC
- Present oral statements to ECOSOC
- Use of United Nations facilities

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (“the 1998 Act”) and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee’s Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of ‘positive actions’ that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above**. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public ‘Call for Evidence’ and from visits to other legislatures**.

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 **Statistical Outline**

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 **Policy**

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

1 http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is ‘representation in public life/decision-making’, which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women’s participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Many explanations have been put forward to explain the lack of women in political life and especially in leadership positions. First of all, deep-rooted stereotypes about women lead to gender discrimination in political life. Indeed, social expectations see women as responsible for the household/family sphere whereas responsibilities in the political sphere fall to men². Women are primarily defined by these expectations, that is to say family responsibilities, caring roles and housekeeping. Therefore, a real gendered division of labour appears in the household and constitutes a strong barrier for women who are eager to take up a leadership role in the political sphere. This division was often denounced as inconsistent since each sphere permeates the other³: on the one hand laws directly affect households and private relationships, such as marriage law; on the other hand, current power structures directly rely on the work women perform in households. Even when women get involved in political life, their role is most of the time linked to this assumption of the ‘private woman’ and her

2 Pateman, C (1989), *The Disorder of Women : Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory*, Stanford University Press

3 Nussbaum, M et al. (2003), *Essays on Gender and Governance*, Development Resource Center, UNDP

caring role⁴. This is particularly obvious at national politics where ‘soft’ portfolios, such as education, health or family issues, are mostly given to women. One cannot deny recent progress in female representation in public life, but too often women have to adapt to a system designed for men and unfriendly to family commitments, with long working hours and no facilities to help parents⁵.

It can also be argued that women limit themselves in public life and lack self-confidence to go beyond their traditional role. Furthermore, women have less access to networks of influence and to finance; they are also less encouraged by their peers to take up responsibilities in public life⁶. Within the political sphere, political parties are often reluctant to put forward a high number of women candidates in elections because they assume voters are not ready to elect a woman (the ‘imputed prejudice’) or they invoke the ‘incumbency factor’ according to which it secures more voters if the same candidate runs for election again⁷, all of which open very few opportunities for women. As far as the media are concerned, women can be put off by the exposure it entails. Females in the public eye are more easily attacked around their expected respectability, and their image is more sexualised than that of their male counterparts⁸. On top of this, the specific Northern Irish situation adds some barriers. Politics is indeed organised along community lines and diversity issues are mostly understood in terms of relations between communities, not in terms of gender diversity⁹.

The need for better inclusion and representation of women in public life is now widely recognised, but the justification is not always straightforward and can vary depending on the political structures and opportunities. On the one hand, the rights-based discourse simply states that gender equality is a matter of global justice: women represent half of humankind and as such they have a right to play an equal part in public life. This is seen as a prerequisite for democracy, where the government is inclusive and accountable to its citizens and takes into account the perspectives and experiences of all its population¹⁰. On the other hand, another argument emphasizes the efficiency of gender equality. Women, as a different group with different needs, perspectives and experiences, will promote issues and laws which will benefit women and indeed families. Specialists often state that a minimum of 30% female representation in parliaments is needed to improve the situation of women effectively because they are more willing to promote women’s interests and more aware of the needs of women through their personal experience¹¹. It is also believed they will promote family-friendly legislation¹², will increase financial performance and transparency and will contribute to the advancement of other social issues such as children’s rights¹³. From this, some draw the conclusion that there would be a ‘feminine’ way of doing politics and there

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- 4 Cowell-Meyers, K (2003), *Women in Northern Ireland Politics : gender and the politics of peace-building in the new legislative assembly*, Irish Political Studies
 - 5 Stakeholder Engagement Event held at the Ulster Business School on March 25th 2013, Gender Equality at Executive Level in the Northern Ireland Public Sector, University of Ulster
 - 6 Ballington, J et al. (2012), *Empowering women for stronger political parties : a guidebook to promote women’s political participation*[caps?], United Nations Development Programme and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs
 - 7 Bird, K (2004), *The political representation of Women and Ethnic Minorities in established democracies: a framework for comparative research*[caps?], AMID Working Paper Series, McMaster University, Canada
 - 8 Nussbaum, M et al. (2003), *ibid*
 - 9 Side, K (2007), *Women’s Civil and Political Citizenship in the Post- Good Friday Agreement Period in Northern Ireland*, CAWR, Belfast
 - 10 UN Women website : <http://www.unwomen.org/> Last access 13/5/2013
 - 11 Dahlerup, D (1988), *From a Small to a Large Minority: Women in Scandinavian Politics*, Scandinavian Politics Studies, Volume 11, Issue 4. The objective of 30% of women in parliaments to effectively foster change was internationally recognised during the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995.
 - 12 Powley, E (2007), *Rwanda : The Impact of Women Legislators on Policy Outcomes Affecting Children and Families*, in *State of the World’s Children*
 - 13 UNICEF (2007), ‘Reaping the Double Dividend of Gender Equality’, in *The State of the World’s [cf.above] Children 2007*, UNICEF, New York
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would be a 'women's interest'. But authors such as Anne Phillips¹⁴ challenge these ideas and emphasise the complexity of the notion of representation in politics. Indeed, it has been recognised that women do not constitute a homogeneous group and that gender identity intersects with other features such as race, ethnicity and religion¹⁵. Whether one woman represents 'all women' or not is not obvious since they do not all have the same experience or interests to defend. Furthermore, if women are said to have a different perception of their role in public life, it is not even clear if they translate their beliefs and attitudes into concrete actions for women¹⁶. Finally, saying women bring new values to politics is an argument which needs to be used with caution as there is a risk of homogenising the feminine identity. For instance, feminist associations in France widely used this argument when advocating political parity in the nineties, but somehow it reinforced stereotypes of women being more peaceful, more concerned with social matters and 'softer'. Emphasising a supposedly feminine nature, they overlooked the social structures that indeed give women a different point of view and experience but not necessarily a different nature¹⁷. Diversity is desirable in itself because it brings positive changes, healthier environments and more productivity.

The post-conflict situation in Northern Ireland creates challenges as well as opportunities for women's participation in public life. One of the legacies of the conflict is a strong divide in politics along community lines, which left little space for women to push their interests forward. Even feminism is often seen through a community lens, and as such it is considered as emanating historically from the two sides of the constitutional question. During the conflict women on the Republican side were more accepted as actors in the conflict because Nationalists framed their equality claim in very broad terms, allowing for gender equality to be taken as part of the struggle¹⁸. On the other hand, Unionists used a more gendered discourse during the conflict¹⁹, emphasising male authority and militarism, backed up by housewives at home, and thus making their contribution to the conflict invisible. Beyond this difference, parties from both sides of the political spectrum have a strong internal discipline²⁰. Therefore, party members cannot easily differ from the party whips so women are primarily defined by their political orientation rather than their experience as female citizens.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Examples of good practice in terms of gender equality in public life can be found throughout the world. Using quotas in politics to increase representation of women in governments has been one of the most widespread tactics (95 countries worldwide use it in various forms)²¹ and has proved quite successful. The case of Rwanda is spectacular and is often cited as a good example. Indeed, the country jumped from the 24th ranking in 1995 to 1st position in 2003 in terms of female political representation after the introduction of quotas²². Increasing

14 Phillips, A (1995), *The politics of Presence*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

15 The concept of intersectionality between different disadvantaged and/or minority groups was first theorised by Kimberly Crenshaw in 1989 in *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex : A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, University of Chicago Legal Forum

16 Cowell-Meyers, K (2003), *Women Legislators in Northern Ireland : Gender and Politics in the New Legislative Assembly*, CAWR School of politics, Queen's University Belfast

17 Lepinard, E (2007), *L'égalité introuvable : la parité, les féministes et la république*, Presses de la FNSP, Paris

18 Sales, R (1997), 'Gender and Protestantism in Northern Ireland', in Peter Shirlow and Mark McGovern, eds, *Who Are 'The People'? Unionism, Protestantism and Loyalism in Northern Ireland*, Pluto Press, London

19 Racioppi, L and O'Sullivan See, K (2001), "'This we will maintain' : Gender, ethno-nationalism and the politics of Unionism in Northern Ireland' in *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol 7 No 1 January 2001

20 Ward, R (2004), *Gender issues and the representation of women in Northern Ireland*, *Irish Political Studies*, 19:2

21 UN Women website : <http://www.unwomen.org/> Last access 13/5/2013

22 UN Children's Fund (2004), *The State of the World's Children 2004*, UN

the number of women representatives is key to advancing gender equality and makes women more visible. Seeing more women take up leadership roles can change voters' perceptions about what is a 'good candidate' because they realise that women can be as effective as men in politics²³. However TWN acknowledges that the issue of gender quotas is beyond the scope of this review.

However with this in mind it is also important to state that affirmative action such as quotas have to go along with other initiatives from all stakeholders in order to transform descriptive representation (just numbers) into substantive representation. First and foremost, it concerns the state itself: governments have to be gender-sensitive in budgeting and drafting laws and policies, and they should ensure that all of these are effectively implemented²⁴. In that process, parliamentarians have a key role to play to draw on grassroots experience and then apply it in policy and legislative processes²⁵.

In the wake of the economic crisis, a growing number of people started to challenge the existing modes of power and governance to promote new notions such as participatory democracy (as seen in Switzerland). At the core of this concept is the idea that every citizen has a say on government decisions and should participate in the process of decision-making when it concerns them²⁶. Beyond the strong media coverage of the 'Occupy Wall Street' movement, a whole range of groups and individuals advocated for a new economic, social and political mode of governance which would be focused on local issues, allow for every citizen's active participation and build strong partnerships between state institutions and civil society. Civil society here is understood as all the non-state matters and everything in public life concerning relationships between citizens²⁷. It is believed that this other form of democracy, called participatory, brings about accountability of governments, fairer and more equal decisions, less divisive partisanship and more informed thus more effective state interventions, especially at local level.

This change in the way power is thought of is seen as a great opportunity for women to take up leadership roles and be more included in decision-making processes. Indeed, civil society has been described as a 'middle ground' between the male political sphere and the female private sphere where women can engage as active citizens without experiencing the high barriers²⁸ discussed above. The figures on the composition of the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland show the prevalence of women: they represent 72% of the workforce in this sector²⁹. If more links are developed between the sector and the state, it could enhance the influence of women in decision-making and their representation in government. From that idea, the concept of state feminism has been developed: it envisages a situation where state and women's political agencies interact with the result that the state pays attention to women's movement representatives and demands³⁰.

Anne Phillips however, among others, has warned against the notion of civil society as the solution for gender equality in public life. Indeed, she points out that existing power

23 Deaman, L et al. (2008), *Powerful Women : does exposure reduce bias ?*, Harvard University

24 UN Women website : <http://www.unwomen.org/> Last access 13/5/2013

25 Inter-Parliamentary Union (2007), 'The role of parliamentary committees in mainstreaming gender and promoting the status of women', Seminar for members of parliamentary bodies dealing with gender equality, reports and documents number 52, Geneva

26 Ross, C (2012), *The Leaderless Revolution : how ordinary people will take power and change politics in the 21st century*, Blue Rider Press, Penguin

27 For a good overview of academic controversy over the definition of civil society, see Potter, M (2005), *Women, Civil Society and Peacebuilding : Paths to Peace through Empowerment of Women*, Training for Women Network

28 Ainhorn, B and Sever, C (2003), 'Gender and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe' in *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol 5

29 Northern Ireland Community and Voluntary Agency (April 2012), *State of the Sector VI*, NICVA. This figure contrasts with those for the private sector where women represent 46% of the employees and for the public sector (52%).

30 Mazur, A and McBride, D (2008), 'State Feminism', in Goertz, G and Mazur, A (eds), *Politics, gender and concepts : Theory and Methodology*, Cambridge University Press

structures are often replicated within civil society's organisations and so do not always serve feminist interests and demands.³¹ Indeed, even though the figures have widely improved over the past few years, women represent 48% of the chief executives in the voluntary and community sector in Northern Ireland³², a figure out of proportion to the mainly female composition of its workforce.

Furthermore, as participatory democracy focuses more on the local level, it is seen as a great opportunity for women to be meaningfully involved in public life³³. With the current setting and functioning of political institutions, women seem to have less difficulty being involved at local level than national. Indeed, through their experience in society, women seem to grasp issues related to the community they live in more accurately. Therefore they prove to be very good community mobilisers and are more accepted as leaders by the population. On the more practical side, there is less competition in local politics and local engagement fits more easily with family responsibilities³⁴. But involvement of women should not stop at local politics because it 'suits them better', it should be seen as a launching pad to further challenge gender stereotypes and advance gender equality at all levels of decision-making.

Nowadays, peacebuilding processes are taking place throughout Northern Ireland with the purpose of achieving an inclusive and fair society where individuals have positive relationships³⁵. These initiatives, which acknowledge some failures of previous initiatives and constitute a driving change for society, can open new opportunities for women to take part in public life, all the more as the inclusion of women as active players in the peacebuilding processes is an international requirement, as stated by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)³⁶. This legal framework has the advantage of going beyond the widespread belief that women are naturally predisposed to peace. Rather it states that women experience the conflict differently and therefore have different needs and views which should be included in the decision-making process, but this does not mean they are passive victims of the conflict³⁷. Further to this, the EU has committed itself to the resolution in all its peacebuilding programmes³⁸. This is a powerful tool for the women's sector in Northern Ireland to advance women's representation and participation. It can be used to say that so-far, the peace initiatives did not fully integrate women and it is one of the reasons why Northern Irish society is still facing forms of conflict.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

A key political actor is the political parties themselves which are the essential launching pad for women to access elected office. The reality is that women may be active as members in Northern Ireland political parties but most of them barely make reference to women's issues in their manifestos. Yet it is recognized that women's issues are a strong vehicle for better

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- 31 Phillips, A (2002), 'Does Feminism Need a Concept of Civil Society?' in Chambers, S and Kymlicka, W (eds), *Alternative Conceptions of Civil Society*, Princeton : University Press
 - 32 Northern Ireland Community and Voluntary Agency (2010), *The 2010 Salary Survey*
 - 33 United Nations Development Programme (2011), *Fast Facts – Responsive Institutions : local governance*, UNDP
 - 34 International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, *Consolidated Response: Women's participation in local governments* (<http://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/cr20women27s20participation20in20local20governments20en.pdf>)
 - 35 The Special European Union Programmes Body has set guidelines for organisations seeking Peace funding for projects, inspired by Hamber, B and Kelly, G (2004), 'A working definition of reconciliation', in *Democratic Dialogue*
 - 36 United Nations Resolution 1325 (2000) adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting on October 31st, 2000 S/RES/1325
 - 37 For a good overview of debates surrounding the relationship between women and peace see Potter, M (2005), 'Chapter 1: Women and Peace', in *Women, Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Paths to Peace through the Empowerment of Women*, Training for Women Network
 - 38 European Parliament resolution on participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution 2000/2025 (INI)
-

representation of women in political positions and for focusing more attention on gender issues, as was the case when the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (NIWC) existed.³⁹

Many other steps can be taken targeting the empowerment of women. In a supportive and positive learning environment women who take part in leadership programmes gain in selfconfidence and in knowledge about their rights, which are necessary for them to decide to get involved in public life. Key to this process is also the use of inspiring role models women can draw experience and confidence from⁴⁰.

In the recent publication, 'Sex & Power 2014: Who Runs Britain?'⁴¹, it suggests the following recommendations that TWN would advocate Northern Ireland Political parties take on board:

- **Recommendation 1** – "All political parties should take immediate action to increase the number of women candidates at all levels of election, and to draw those candidates from as wide a variety of backgrounds and communities as possible. This should include positive action measures in selection processes wherever necessary, action plans for implementation...and steps to promote and increase support for a diverse range of women candidates at all levels of elected office"⁴².
- **Recommendation 3** – "All political parties should establish, publish and implement internal complaints procedures for dealing with sexual harassment, discrimination and bullying. These should reflect the fact that political parties are both employers and spaces where unpaid members, activists, staff and public representatives interact with both one another and the general public"⁴³.
- **Recommendation 4** – Political parties should make diversity awareness training, advice and support available to party members involved in candidate selections, all parties should work towards the implementation of statutory maternity and parental leave for representatives⁴⁴.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

N/A

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

TWN believes that political skills training such as undertaken by women on projects such as the Positive/Extending Positive Relations Projects and the Women, Good Relations and Interfaces Project (funded under OFMDFM's Central Good Relations Fund) would greatly increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly through the following vehicles:

39 Ward, R (1997), 'The Northern Ireland Peace Process: A Gender Issue?' in Gilligan, C and Tonge, J, eds, Peace or War? Understanding the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, Aldershot, Ashgate

40 Fearon, K (1996), Power, Politics, Positionings – Women in Northern Ireland, Democratic Dialogue, Belfast (<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/dd/report4/report4g.htm>)

41 Centre for Women and Democracy, 'Sex and Power 2014: Who Runs Britain?' <<http://www.countingwomenin.org>> Accessed August 2014.

42 Ibid, p. 7.

43 Ibid, p. 8.

44 Ibid.

Skills Training

TWN research⁴⁵ through interviews and questionnaires show how political skills training helped them to not only participate but participate in a more meaningful way. When asked to rank how useful 7 different sets of skills are for them in public life, 'public communication skills' were ranked the second most useful, a fact that was reflected in interviews. Indeed, interviewees often used the term 'people skills' describing "how to listen to someone, how you convey your ideas and relate to the person you are discussing with" when discussions turned to this particular skillset. Participants felt they were more comfortable communicating, mediating and negotiating after the training; all of these are prominent tools needed when engaging in politics. In fact a lot of participants directly acknowledged the role of public events organised through the above mentioned projects, as they gave the women a platform to express themselves and apply these skills in a positive environment. On top of this, speakers invited often served as role models for them.

More practically, participants said their involvement in political skills training made them more aware of the opportunities available in regards to participation in public life. Attending training conducted by TWN gave the women more information on the sector and opportunities for involvement. In this process the importance of networking is critical to women, in fact it was ranked as the third most useful skill when collated in the research. Meeting with other women opened new opportunities as they exchanged contacts, experiences, advice and information. It was reported that many of the participants who had finished the training were still keeping in touch with other participants through social events. Interviewees (77.8%) also acknowledged that they had received encouragement from other women in the training in their desire to participate more fully in politics. The above highlights the importance of the link established between participants in training and how networking imparts on their decisions to participate in politics.

Confidence building and Personal Development

The TWN research mentioned above also show how self-confidence was at the heart of participants' decisions to participate in politics. Indeed, 'confidence building and personal development' was ranked as the most useful skill provided through political skills training.

Skills, knowledge and tools provided by the projects such as communication and networking would not have had as big an impact on women if they had not found themselves in a safe and positive environment where they could build their confidence. This process involved selfdiscovery, auto-reflection and positive confrontation; it was an intimate evolution which affected all aspects of women's lives.

Active Citizenship

The research above also highlighted how 65% of women interviewed stated that their perceptions of political life changed positively after their involvement in the training mentioned above. Coupled with this, not only did participants have a better image of political life, they were also more interested in it. Indeed 25.7% of participants said their interest in political life, before becoming involved in the training was 'very strong' or 'strong' whereas after the training, this had grown to 44.2% with an impressive increase from 6.8% to 21.6% of respondents saying their interest in political life was 'very strong' after their involvement in the training: The more self-confident women feel, the higher their interest in political life is.

When answering the questions concerning the flag protests many participants were more confident to talk about their thoughts and opinions. Many of them acknowledged that before the training they would have "*shied away*" and avoided the subject whereas now they felt more willing to discuss it and face the debate. This did not mean that participants imposed their views on others but rather it helped emphasise the need to be open-minded and tolerant of others' opinions while still ready to defend their own viewpoints when required. These

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Mooney, J and Billiet, A, (2013) Women in Public Life, Training for Women Network: Belfast.

qualities are very important in advocating a cause/issue in a productive way while reducing the likelihood of negative conflict/confrontation.

Questionnaires and interviews also revealed that participants were more confident about their self-belief and the power they yield as citizens: This is exactly what is meant by the notion of 'empowerment': *"shifting power, influence and responsibility away from existing centres of power and into the hands of communities and individual citizens"*.⁴⁶ In this regard participants in the training became convinced that participation in political life was not only possible but needed.

As females, many participants felt that they could bring something extra to political life, indeed many participants identified advantages in being a women and how this was something desirable in political life. For instance, some participants mentioned a *"women's network"*, a female solidarity they benefitted from. Furthermore, participants also mentioned their experience as mothers and carers which enabled them to understand and empathise making them more effective.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

In the recent publication, 'Sex & Power 2014: Who Runs Britain?'⁴⁷, it suggests the following recommendations that TWN would advocate Northern Ireland Political parties take on board:

- **Recommendation 2** – "In order to enable everyone concerned to develop a much better understanding of who is standing for elected office at all levels, an equalities monitoring form similar to that used in recruitment for public appointments and applications for funding should be introduced by the relevant election authority. It would be completed and submitted to returning officers by all candidates together with nomination forms at all levels of election, and the results collated and published annually"⁴⁸.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

TWN believe that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take the following actions to enhance the role of women in politics:

- **Women bear the main responsibility for childcare:** The Northern Ireland Assembly should include childcare provision to members to remove this disadvantage to women in terms of participation.
- **Women bear the main responsibility for other caring roles, such as elder care and care of disabled family members:** The Northern Ireland Assembly should include provisions for respite care arrangements for members so that female members are not disadvantaged in terms of participation.
- **Women bear the main responsibility for the care and administration of domestic life:** The Northern Ireland Assembly should incorporate some form of flexible working for members enabling participation that is responsive to personal circumstances which does not disadvantage women.

46 Communities and Local Government (2008), Communities in Control: Real People, Real Power – White Paper.

47 Centre for Women and Democracy, 'Sex and Power 2014: Who Runs Britain?'
<<http://www.countingwomenin.org>> Accessed August 2014.

48 Ibid, p.7.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

N/A

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission



TWN Gender-Proofing Checklist

TWN is a consultee under the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which is to assess the impact of policy on specific groups regarding equality. TWN comments on policy development in the area of equality between men and women, while contributing to consultations in other areas. With regard to gender issues, the following are key points of policy the absence of which indicates a disadvantage to women.

- Women bear the main responsibility for childcare: Any policy that does not include the provision of childcare disadvantages women in terms of participation
- Women bear the main responsibility for other caring roles, such as elder care and care of disabled family members: Any policy that does not include provisions for respite care arrangements or arrangements for temporary care of family members disadvantages women in terms of participation
- Women bear the main responsibility for the care and administration of domestic life: Any policy that does not incorporate some form of flexible working enabling participation that is responsive to personal circumstances disadvantages women
- Men tend to be given priority in the allocation of household resources, including means of transport: Any policy that does not ensure sufficient transport arrangements, particularly in rural areas, excludes women
- Statistics indicate that women constitute the larger proportion of older people in society, the ratio increasing the greater the age: Any policy that disadvantages older people not only constitutes age discrimination, but also gender discrimination
- Many areas of policy development include some form of consultation or advisory body or forum: Any body that does not have a significant proportion of women, with sufficient financial support, does not represent the interests of women
- Consultation processes are often restricted to a policy document available for comment: Any consultation process that does not take steps to sufficiently access the opinions of women does not represent women's views
- Women constitute more than half of the population, which includes constituting more than half of other disadvantaged groups, indicating multiple disadvantage for women in those groups: Any policy or legislation that subsumes the category of 'women' into other categories or generalisations or does not gender-proof each individual group ignores the multiple disadvantages women experience and therefore discriminates against women

For further information, contact:

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Womens Forum NI

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder ‘Call for Evidence’ Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Women’s Forum NI	Telephone Number: XXXX		
Stakeholder Address C/o Agape Centre 238-266 Lisburn Road Belfast BT9 6GF	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)		
	Registered Political Party		Local Government
	Academic		Government
	Legislature		Non-Government
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public		

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

Women’s Forum Northern Ireland is an “umbrella” body for women’s organisations in the Province. Currently, it continues to represent a broad range of constituent organisations and hence approaching 100,000 women across Northern Ireland.

It is an apolitical and anti-sectarian voluntary organisation which seeks to enhance the role and influence of women in the life of our society, to empower individuals to achieve change and to promote equality of opportunity for women. This is reflected in the Mission Statement: “Women in Harmony – Achieving Change” and in the current Aims and Objectives

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

- 2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above**. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

- 3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

¹ http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Behaviour of Assembly members

The behaviour of Assembly members is frequently intimidating and creates a negative perception which makes women wary of putting their heads above the parapet.

Evidence: – Women's Coalition members will confirm the aggression aimed at them; aggression which ranged from loud, abusive comments such as, 'If the heat is too great go back to the kitchen,' and well documented evidence of patronising behaviour towards them and subsequent female MLA's. Not many women or men would be prepared to persevere in local politics as Anna Lo has done or Naomi Long MP

Electoral Apathy and Disillusionment

Historically women did not go into politics or decision making because of the obstacles of adequate childcare and anti-social hours. Those women, now elderly or in middle age, unless they have played an active rôle as party members, would find it impossible to get onto party lists and they become involved in voluntary women's organisations as an alternative.

How many young women apart from the party faithful and some community activists actually turn out to vote? How many, when asked, will say that they are disgusted with politics in Northern Ireland and see no reason to vote or become involved in decision making? They say that the parties have nothing to offer and that control is in the hands of two parties which oppose each other.

Media Coverage of Women in Politics

Media coverage of women in politics is frequently biased. Inappropriate reference is made to their appearance, what they are wearing etc.

Evidence: Media reporting, radio & TV, and newspapers.

Responsibility of Political Parties

Political parties must be more pro-active in bringing women into the process. Although there has been some improvement, not enough women are being selected as candidates for their Parties. Most women wait until they are asked or approached.

Evidence: 'Women into politics' conference at QUB 2011. All of the female politicians who spoke at the conference confirmed that this was the case.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

It would be a helpful exercise if all female assembly members could be asked to complete a questionnaire indicating how they came to be interested in politics, how they became candidates, how they faced the challenges of gender inequality, how they juggle caring responsibilities, what training they found particularly beneficial etc. The outcome of this research might encourage more women to pursue a career in politics.

The setting up of bodies such as The Gender Advisory Panel and the All Party Group on UNSCR 1325 are steps in the right direction.

We would also direct you to the many initiatives and projects of UN Women (formerly UNIFEM), the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the advancement of women, to train and prepare women for decision making responsibility.

For example, see <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2014/7/global-forum-on-women-in-parliaments-in-rwanda> Following extensive training programmes by UNIFEM, women in Rwanda hold an unprecedented 63.8% of seats in its lower house, sealing its place as the world's only majority female parliament.

Currently UN Women is working to raise awareness of the need to involve women in decision making in the Pacific islands where there are currently fewer female representatives in parliament than in Saudi Arabia. It could be argued that neither example is relevant to Northern Ireland but in both examples quoted, preparatory work was key to achieving the desired outcome. In these widely different countries the first step was to identify the issues affecting women. For example the key issues affecting women in the islands of the Pacific are domestic violence often exacerbated by natural disasters, the difficulty of obtaining legal aid and virtually no representation in politics. As the issues are addressed, the women become progressively more involved in finding solutions and go on to play an active part in decision making.

The issues affecting women's interest in politics in Northern Ireland are listed in our response to Question 1. Until these points are addressed we believe that there will be little progress in attracting women to a career in politics.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

(This box will expand as you type)

- Political parties need to have a strategy that ensures that female party members are actively encouraged to put themselves forward as candidates
- They must convince women that they can make a difference
- They must provide more confidence building and assertiveness training for women
- They need policies to create a functioning, forward looking Assembly which will encourage women (and men) to take an active part in decision making
- They should set up programmes for schools, programmes with particular emphasis on girls, which focus on social issues in Northern Ireland and the importance of playing an active part in decision making in order to improve our society

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

N/A

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Assembly behaviour

The conduct of Assembly and Committee meetings should be critically examined and a code of behaviour imposed which requires MLA's to show respect for each other regardless of gender or party. Voters want to see genuine debate, courtesy and less petty point scoring. . This type of debate is possible as there is ample evidence of positive consultation in the voluntary sector where trained facilitators do not permit verbal abuse. We would suggest that this responsibility falls to the Speaker who should have more authority to insist on common courtesy.

Look at other countries

People come to Northern Ireland from all over the world to learn about conflict solving initiatives and our observers travel the world sharing our experience. Observers known to our members have reported on many examples of good practice that they have seen in Rwanda, East Timor, Vanuatu where women are playing an increasingly active part in decision making yet such information is not being shared with the Northern Ireland Assembly or they are simply not interested. Research in countries emerging from conflict shows that women are going into politics because they want to get things done, repair the damage but while our Assembly continues to play the blame game and live in the past, we believe that women will continue to feel that there is no rôle for them in Northern Ireland politics. The short but difficult answer is – fix the politics.

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

That female assembly member interact with women's organisations and women in the wider arena.

'Confidence building' mentoring should be provided for those women who feel that a lack of confidence is a barrier.

We would put it on record that we greatly appreciate the work of those Northern Ireland women politicians who have engaged with Women's Forum and our member organisations. They have repeatedly gone the extra mile and impressed us with their heavy workloads, stamina and dedication. It is by engaging with the community that women in the political arena will win support and attract other women to become engaged.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

We would again refer you to our responses to Question 4.

At present, due to the gender imbalance within the NI Assembly and voter apathy, decisions affecting the majority of the people in Northern Ireland are taken by only a small minority of the population.

Only when there is a more civilised approach to debate and general behaviour ensuring that women are fully accepted as equals and not just 'the token female', will the rôle of women in politics be able to develop and progress.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Women's Resource & Development Agency (WRDA)

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

Contents

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Women's Resource & Development Agency-WRDA	Telephone Number: Tel; 028 9023 0212			
Stakeholder Address 6 Mount Charles Belfast BT7 1NZ Email: anne.mcvicker@wrda.net Website: www.wrda.net	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)			
	Registered Political Party		Local Government	
	Academic		Government	
	Legislature		Non-Government	X
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public			
	WRDA is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity and operates within the community/voluntary sector.			

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

The Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) is a regional organisation whose mission is to 'to advance women's equality and participation in society by working to transform political, economic, social, and cultural conditions'. The organisation was established in 1983 and works with women's groups from all traditions in the most severely disadvantaged communities, and from urban and rural areas of Northern Ireland.

We work from the grass roots to the highest levels of policymaking and politics, providing advocacy and lobbying support. WRDA is a membership organisation with over 500 members comprised of women's groups, organisations, and individual members. We engage in lobbying and advocacy work, putting women's issues onto the political agenda. We manage Womenslink, the e-list for the sector (180+ subscribers) and the Women's Policy Group e-list (61 subscribers) & NI Women's Budget Group e-lists.

Our commitment to women's empowerment is most evident in our Community Facilitator training programme, which enables grass roots women to gain a Level 3 Certificate in Learning and Development, thereafter obtaining employment with our social enterprise, delivering our health programmes.

Over the last 2 and a ½ years the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) and the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland have been partners in a Peace 3 project that aims to capture the experiences of women living through conflict and through the subsequent period of conflict resolution and peace building.

The aim has been to learn from the experience of women who have lived through these processes and to try to identify ways in which to make a positive impact. Over 1,000 women have been brought together on a cross community and a cross border basis and they have had an opportunity to exchange learning with women from other conflict areas through the Foundations for Peace Network.

Key issues were highlighted in different workshops which took place throughout Northern Ireland and in border county areas. These were:

- Violence, safety and security
- Decision making and representation
- Women's rights are human rights – women and social justice
- Women and the legacies of the past
- Women and institutional change
- Women making a difference

Reports were produced from the different workshops/conference & disseminated on our/partners websites & shared through social media.

- Following the conference held last October on Women-Dealing with the Past, the views expressed were discussed & relayed to Megan O' Sullivan re: Haass/O'Sullivan talks.
- The conference held in March this year titled Haass/O'Sullivan; What women think, copies of this report was sent to British/Irish govts, & OFMDFM and so far replies have only been received from the Brit/Irish govts, disappointing that our First Ministers haven't replied.
- These views were feed into & influenced the development of the Strategic guide & Toolkit which was launched at our final event 'No Peace without Women' was held in Crumlin Road Gaol on 27th June.

This guide will assist the public sector to enhance the protection of women's human rights & advance gender equality as central to building peace & development. The Guide will also assist the realisation of the peace commitments & benefits of the Belfast/GFA by women & society generally, through the effective application of the SPIRIT & principles of UNSCR1325 on Women, Peace & Security. It is a unique guide that translates the international women, peace & security framework into a domestic application in NI/Ireland. A copy of the Strategic Policy Guide & Toolkit and briefing papers are attached.

In this response to the call for evidence re: Review on Women in Politics & the NI Assembly, I will be drawing on the work of the project discussed above and from the 1,000 participants

and the reports produced from all the workshops and conferences which are available from downloading from our website www.wrda.net

WRDA also held a Focus group on Women in Politics & the NI Assembly on 6th August 2014 which 30 women attended and I have collated their responses as evidence for this submission.

Guidelines for Completion of Submissions

The Committee would ask that stakeholders submit **electronic** responses using this pro forma.

Stakeholders should be aware that their written evidence will be discussed by the Committee in public session and included in the Committee's published Report.

Stakeholders should also be aware that if they decide to publish their submissions, the publication would not be covered by Assembly privilege in relation to the law of defamation.

Section 2 – Introduction

Powers

2.1 The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:

- i. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
- ii. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

2.2 The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:

- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
- ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
- iii. **Examine what are the merits of 'positive actions' that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
- iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the **(i) to (iv) above. This will include evidence from Assembly Research and Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.**

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

2.3 The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:

- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3 – Background

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

3.1 The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

¹ http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
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Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Adversarial Setup of politics NI conflict led instead of reconciliatory or cooperative

Politics seen as male dominated stigma (women seen as not as smart rational enough, enough)

Glass ceiling

- Men
- Employment legislation

■ Childcare

Need for more structural support

Childcare too expensive, lack of availability, low wages of childcare staff

NI culture women are carers (so if there are two careers in a family women tend to be the one to step back and pick up family responsibilities)

Still a lot of **employment discrimination** relating to pregnancy

There is an issue of **lack of confidence** for women

Politics can be **perceived as “men led”** and biased against women

Lack of leadership from current parties

Due to **stereotyping** women can be seen as crazy, irrational, aggressive rather than ambitious in a work situation while men seen as passionate, ambitious, rational, and not child carers –

Quote: “Women now have the right to have 2 jobs i.e. raising a family and working”

Here raising a family is not seen as valuable while Sweden values parents bringing up children. For example the best support for children is where women and men both play a role and the state supports this.

(We need to have men taking a more active role)

Difficulty of being heard as a woman in male dominated meetings

Culture of politics not family friendly e.g. meeting times, hours worked nature of decision making

Current lack of women in politics – lack of “critical mass” (one third is seen as a critical mass)

Lack of training – making meetings work, media training, public speaking

Both Westminster Parliament and NI Assembly are laid out in a way that sets the scene for an **adversarial approach** compared with Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament which have building layout which mirrors a more cooperative approach.

Negotiation skills seen as a sign of Good leadership and are very much valued and respected in work places – except in NI.

Apathy

Young women don’t see the relevance of politics in their lives. They see politics as full of conflict.

Young women don’t know how to get into politics,

Young women feel disengaged from politics

View of Women in the Media

Reluctance of women to adhere/represent **one particular Party** versus the difficulty in being heard outside the current party system.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Childcare – variety of childcare - flexible times, crèches, provision for older children 0-16 all needed

Flexi working

One Participant is currently working in a public sector organisation where there is flexibility of working hours. There is:

- Agreement made that everyone is willing to take on extra work when necessary
- All women team
- Good Leadership

Family friendly practices felt this type of model would encourage more women to get involved in City/District Councils and the Assembly.

Clear job role The Scottish assembly there is a clear job role that is outcome focused rather than on process – attending meetings but no outcomes)

Family friendly practices (Paternity leave) Job role, working hours, and home working

Opportunities developed in the Voluntary Community Sector e.g. Children's Law centre, Children's Commissioners Office

Training at a variety of levels e.g. First Step awareness raising, e.g. personal development, Shadowing, next step skills, public speaking, negotiation skills,

Specific Training e.g. the model of DemocraShe

Leadership Training

A **Support network** for women

Career guidance on politics for young women in schools also an introduction/ first steps to politics in the curriculum

Awareness raising – what is politics?

It is not just the NI Assembly but included Councils, Public bodies, e.g. Health Trusts, Housing, & Education.

Initiatives

It is not just Scandinavian countries that have more women representatives Belgium, The Netherlands and African Countries South Africa and Rwanda has most female e representatives – this came about following the Genocide.

Norway Enforced Y3 Critical mass

NI Should be given a timeline – if not doing it will be enforced (by financial penalties) then looked at Boards of industry, given 5 years to address this some companies privatised so they would come out of the FTSE

Dow Jones in USA top companies have to have a woman on the Board

But as well as legislation the barriers also need to be addressed.

Childcare was not assigned a lead department in the assembly (neither Health nor Education wanted it) is it OFMDFM?

“Do we either bring women into the existing adversarial system or will this culture go on until women come in?”

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

Shadowing,

Champions

Youth Groups

a. Training

b. Awareness raising with young women (need to see the relevance to their lives)

Women Caucuses

Women only lists (in some constituencies)

Quota system (Brings up question of merit...)

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

Gender champions can be female or male or both

Shadowing/ training

Quota system (helps to work towards a “critical mass”

Positive Action

4. Question

What ‘positive actions’ would you recommend to increase women’s representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

Job roles, Criteria and person specification (politicians “school”)

Quota system

Support system (childcare, working conditions etc. see earlier points.)

Gender Champions

Shadowing

Working with **community and schools**

Suggestion that **training is a need for both women and men going into politics**

Currently no criteria for politicians so the current “meritocracy” is basically the “old boy network”)

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

Shadowing visits to other parliaments

Shadowing successful women e.g. City Councils

Setting up **Focus Groups**

Women's networks

Funding for **best practice research** with community focus

Structural support

Political leadership Programmes (e.g. Washington DC)

Training on equality for young men and women

Problem is that women need to fall in with party views which may be anti-quotas

"There needs to be a gendered lens on any support systems and way of working"

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

Greater focus is needed on increasing women's engagement, participation and representation both numerically and in effective influence. Support can take many forms: strengthening existing networks; mentoring younger women; empowering women through appropriate skills to build confidence to actively engage, develop policy and lobby; guidance for women's groups; and more sustainable funding.

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

(This box will expand as you type)

Civic Forum as a way to engage women into political life

Quotas in community sector

Women's sector support e.g. Funding – CEDAW

Quotes from our Focus Group:

Involving more women in politics is about changing mind-sets

"Need to realise that women need to go into politics to bring about change"

"Some women don't know how to take the next step to move into politics"

"Politics needs to be on the career prospectus in schools and opportunities for young women"

"The existing parties could promote women's role within their own party".

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

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Thank you for your submission

Women's TEC

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

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Section 1 – Stakeholder Details

Stakeholder Name: Lynn Carvill	Telephone Number: 02890 749810			
Stakeholder Address 161 – 163, Duncairn Gardens Belfast BT15 2GE	Stakeholder Type (Include one or more X)			
	Registered Political Party		Local Government	
	Academic		Government	
	Legislature		Non-Government	X
	Other (Please Specify) / Member of the Public			

Please provide some background information on your role as a stakeholder

WOMEN'STEC provides training and education programmes in non-traditional work areas for women. Courses include electrics, plumbing, joinery, horticulture and IT. We are currently expanding our services into other non-traditional female work areas eg. STEM. Political decision-making for women remains a non-traditional work area and therefore of great interest to WOMEN'STEC. We are pleased to participate in this very important and timely review.

I was recently appointed as Chief Executive of WOMEN'STEC, but previous to joining the organisation I worked as lobbyist for the Women's Sector. A key aspect of my work at this

time was to work with and support female politicians in NI and to build alliances to advocate for more women in political decision-making. To this end I collaborated with a variety of organisations and institutions to host conferences and seminars on the issue e.g.:

‘How to Elect More Women in Northern Ireland’ (2011) with the QUB Centre for the Advancement of Women

‘Pop Up Political Academy for Young Women (2013) with Politics Plus

Much of what is included in this submission emanates from my previous work with politicians, men and women, in local and regional government across NI.

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Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

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Information Services, expert / academic witnesses, a public ‘Call for Evidence’ and from visits to other legislatures.

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3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world. Apart from the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable Western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland and in general.

- 23.5% of Local Councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- With 5 of 26 Mayors /Chairs of Councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 Ministers and Junior Ministers are women
- 4 Chairpersons and 2 Deputy Chairperson of Committees are women out of 18 Committees

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

1 http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'.

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data;
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies;
- To actively promote an inclusive society; and
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

3.5 Legislative Frameworks

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provision of the Order. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

Further information on barriers to women's participation within legislatures; examples of proposals, mechanisms to overcome barriers; quotas and support mechanisms to increase the political participation are set out in paper NIAR 570-13.

www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4 – Questions to consider

1. Question

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

Key challenges and barriers facing women in relation to entering politics are well documented and evidenced:

- Childcare persists as predominantly a female responsibility. Childcare and caring generally is a key challenge for women.
- NI is a society emerging from conflict. The persistent adversarial nature of politics here, involving frequent personal verbal attacks is anathema to many aspiring politicians, particularly women. Over the last 20 years blatant sexism has surfaced periodically in our Assembly. ‘Politics’ in NI is still not viewed by many women as an inclusive environment.
- Although outside the remit of the Assembly, efforts by political parties to recruit and select women must be viewed as the single biggest barrier to women’s participation in politics. At the ‘How to Elect More Women in NI’ conference in March 2011, all of the female politicians, when asked the question said they had been ‘asked’ to run for election by senior party members– one female politician was asked 5 times before she agreed. Men are also ‘asked’ but the challenge in relation to this issue is that men are asked much more frequently than women.

2. Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

The provision of training for aspiring politicians is a crucial support and in the past has demonstrated positive outcomes. The training offered by DemocraSHE during the 1990s is viewed incredibly positively by those who participated on the programme.

There is also a raft of evidence in existence that shows female role models and a higher visibility of women in politics encourages younger women to consider a career in this area. The assembly could ensure that links between young women and female politicians are promoted eg. Embed the Pop-Up Political Academy for Young Women in a programme of events to encourage young women into politics.

Many politicians begin their political career by being ‘asked’ to run for election. It would be useful if the Assembly could provide supports to existing female politicians and to political parties to open up politics and provide outreach services where aspiring politicians (particularly female) can be identified.

Evidence across the world in relation to this issue demonstrates the most effective way to enhance female political representation is to introduce a gender quota system.

3a Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

- A voluntary gender quota system for candidate selection.
- A gender action plan with actions and targets monitored by the Party Executive.
- A resourced and structured women’s group/committee as a sub-committee to the Party Executive.
- A designated women’s officer

- Resourced and specific training for female party members
- Active outreach services to recruit female party members

The political will of Party Leaders in relation to resolving this issue cannot be underestimated.

3b. Question

Political Parties are asked to specify what policies and initiatives they have in place to increase women in political life?

The most effective method to increase women's representation in the NI Assembly would be the introduction of gender quotas. The Assembly working with political parties could introduce a 'shadowing/internship' scheme specifically aimed at women.

I would refer you to the other recommendations outlined in this submission – all of which would potentially lead to an increase in women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

4. Question

What 'positive actions' would you recommend to increase women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

(This box will expand as you type)

5. Question

What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

It may be an idea to survey current female MLAs with a view to ascertaining what support/network opportunities they would like.

Providing networking opportunities for female politicians both internally and with other legislatures could also be useful. There are various examples of good practice across other legislatures that could be examined more closely.

6. Question

Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

- The Northern Ireland Assembly could negotiate and implement a Gender Action Plan.
- A 'Code of Conduct' could be devised for Assembly business that includes clear principles in relation to non-tolerance of discriminatory behaviour (to include sexism). Breaches of the Code of Conduct should be met with stipulated penalties.
- The Assembly could implement/lobby for family friendly policies to be introduced, such as paid maternity / parental leave.
- The Assembly could lobby for the introduction of job-sharing possibilities for MLAs

Section 5 – Additional Information

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

In conclusion, **WOMEN'STEC** would reiterate that we very much welcome this review.

While the NI Assembly can go some way to resolving this issue, it must be noted that political parties themselves wield much of the power in terms of increasing the number of women in politics. They decide 'who' they field as candidates and options open to the electorate are already substantially decreased on election day.

In the 2011 Assembly elections there were 5 constituencies where only one female candidate featured on the ballot paper (Foyle, North Down, South Antrim, Strangford and West Tyrone). In the constituency of Newry and Armagh the electorate were faced with an all-male ballot paper.

WOMEN'STEC do not want to see this scenario repeated in 2016.

Section 6 – Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or 028 90521928

To arrive no later than Wednesday 3 September 2014 please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

List of Stakeholders contacted under 'Call for Evidence'

- Alliance Party of Northern Ireland
- Basil McCrea, Independent
- Beibhinn Women's Centre
- Claire McGing, Maynooth University
- Claire Sugden, Independent
- DemocraShe
- Democratic Unionist Party
- Dr. Paul Chaney, Cardiff University
- Eirigi
- Fawcett Society
- Foyle Women's Information Network
- Green Party in Northern Ireland
- Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
- Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- John McAllister, Independent
- National Women's Council for Ireland
- NI Conservatives
- NI Council for Ethnic Minorities
- NI Local Government Association
- Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
- Politics and International Relations School of Social and Political Science University of Edinburgh
- Prof. Yvonne Galligan, Queen's University Belfast
- Rural Women's Network NI
- Sinn Féin
- Social Democratic and Labour Party
- Traditional Unionist Voice
- Training for Women Network NI
- United Kingdom Independence Party
- Ulster Unionist Party
- Women for Election
- Women in Irish Politics
- Women's Forum NI
- Women's Information NI
- Women's Resource and Development Agency
- Women's Support Network
- Women's Tec
- Youth Action NI
- Youth Council for NI
- Youth Forum Belfast City Council



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

**Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review
Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly**

Section 1

Stakeholder Details

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- Powers
- Assembly and Executive Review Committee's Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review.
- Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

Section 3: Background

- **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly**

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Section 4: Questions to consider

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Section 5: Additional Information

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Section 2

Introduction

Powers

- 2.1.** The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is a Standing Committee established in accordance with Section 29A and 29B of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (“the 1998 Act”) and Standing Order 59 which, amongst other powers, provide for the Committee to:
- I. make a report to the Secretary of State, the Assembly and the Executive Committee, by no later than 1 May 2015, on the operation of Parts III and IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998; and
 - II. consider such other matters relating to the functioning of the Assembly or the Executive as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

Assembly and Executive Review Committee’s Terms of Reference for and approach to this Review

- 2.2.** The Committee agreed the **Terms of Reference** of this Review on **24 June 2014** as follows:
- i. **Analyse the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entry into politics in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - ii. **Examine potential existing initiatives which would assist women in relation to entry into politics in this Assembly**
 - iii. **Examine what are the merits of ‘positive actions’ that have been successful within the United Kingdom and Ireland and within other jurisdictions, and to consider their potential impact in the context of Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**
 - iv. **Provide recommendations / conclusions on i to iii above, including initiatives / mechanisms to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland and in particular this Assembly**

Phase 1 – Review Evidence Gathering

The Review will take evidence on **Women in Politics in the Northern Ireland Assembly** in relation to the (i) to (iv) above. This will include evidence from **Assembly Research and Information Services**, expert / academic witnesses, a

public 'Call for Evidence' and from visits to other legislatures.

Phase 2 – Consideration and Report

The Committee will consider all evidence received in relation to **Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** and report and provide recommendations / conclusions to the Assembly on these matters by in **late autumn 2014**.

Matters Outside the Scope of the Review

- 2.3.** The Committee has agreed that the following issue is outside of the scope of the Review:
- **Alternative electoral systems / models**

Section 3

BACKGROUND

This section provides some background information on some issues being considered by the Committee as part of this Review.

3.1. The following sections provide information relating to **Women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly** drawn from the Northern Ireland Assembly Research & Information Service Research paper NIAR 570-13.¹

3.2 Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 22 female Members out of a total of 108 (22%), although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to two more female than male co-option by a party and independent Member replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 Assembly elections (17.4%).

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The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates.

3.3 Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making.

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These include:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

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One of the Key Action Areas of the Strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives:

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www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf

Section 4**Questions to consider****(1) Question**

What are the key challenges / barriers facing women in relation to entering politics in Northern Ireland, and in particular the Northern Ireland Assembly, and what evidence can you provide on this?

(This box will expand as you type)

(2) Question

Can you provide evidence on initiatives which demonstrates positive outcomes to encourage more women to pursue a career in politics which could be applied to the Northern Ireland Assembly?

(This box will expand as you type)

(3a) Question

What policies should political parties have in place to increase the number of women candidates in Northern Ireland elections?

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What recommendations would you put forward to enhance the role of women already active in the political arena in Northern Ireland (providing evidence for recommendations as applicable)?

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Do you consider there are specific initiatives / actions that the Northern Ireland Assembly as an institution should take to enhance the role of women in politics, including a gender sensitive environment – and if so please include your recommendations.

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Section 5**Additional Information**

Please provide any additional information which you believe will be of assistance to the Committee during the course of the Review.

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Section 6

Contact Details

All responses should be sent by email please to:

The Senior Assembly Committee Clerk
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 276
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Tel: 028 90521787 or
028 90521928

To arrive no later than Tuesday 25 November please

Email: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Thank you for your submission

Related Correspondence

Stakeholder Letter



7 July 2014

Dear

I am contacting you on behalf of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Committee has recently begun a Review focusing on *Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly*. At its meeting on the 24 June 2014 the Committee agreed the Terms of Reference and 'Call for Evidence' paper for this Review. Please find attached a copy of this paper. An electronic version is also available at the Committee webpage: <http://nia1.me/23x>

I appreciate you have already presented to the Committee on this Review. However, you may well be interested in responding to the Committee's 'Call for Evidence' and if so, I would appreciate it if you could complete the attached and return it to me no later than **3 September 2014** please.

Yours sincerely,

Kate McCullough

Assistant Assembly Clerk

Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 9052 1928 e-mail: committee.assemblyandexecutivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Letter to COFMdFM Chairperson



Mr Stephen Moutray
Chairperson
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Stormont Estate
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Mr. Mike Nesbitt MLA,
Chairperson,
Committee for the Office for the First and Office of the deputy First Minister,
Room 285,
Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw, Stormont,
Belfast, BT4 3XX

7 July 2014

Dear Mike

At its meeting on the 8 April 2014 Members of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee noted you were content for the Committee to take forward its new Review - *Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly*. It was also noted you requested to receive the Terms of Reference of the Review.

Please find attached the Call for Evidence paper - includes the Terms of Reference - which you will wish to consider in relation to the response from the OFMdFM Committee. I also want to inform you that today the Call for Evidence paper has also been circulated to Political Party Leaders, relevant stakeholders and has appeared as an advertisement in the local newspapers.

If the Committee choose to respond I look forward to receiving your submission.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Stephen Moutray

Chairperson

Cc Karen Jardine, Clerk to the COFMdFM

Political Parties -Independents



Dear

At its meeting on 24 June 2014, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee agreed the Terms of Reference for its Review of ***Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly***.

I now invite you to submit your views, using the 'Call for Evidence' pro forma (which includes the Terms of Reference for the Review), for the Committee's consideration.

The 'Call for Evidence' paper is provided as an attachment in the email from the Committee Secretariat, and is also available on the Assembly and Executive Review Committee's webpage: <http://nia1.me/23x>

The deadline for the return of the Call for Evidence is **Wednesday, 3 September**.

Should you have any queries in relation to making a submission, please contact the Committee Clerk, whose contact details can be found at the end of the Call for Evidence pro forma.

On behalf of the Committee, I look forward to receiving your views.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Stephen Moutray

Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Cc Mr Trevor Lunn MLA

Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 9052 1928 e-mail: committee.assemblyandexecutivereview@niassembly.gov.uk



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 4

Correspondence and Other Papers relating to the Review

Speaker to Chairperson

The Speaker



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Office of the Speaker
Room 39, Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw, Stormont
Belfast BT4 3XX

Tel: +44 (0) 28 9052 1130
Fax: +44 (0) 28 9052 1959
email: speaker@niassembly.gov.uk

Stephen Moutray MLA
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 242
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
BT4 3XX

19 May 2014

Dear Stephen,

I am aware that the Assembly and Executive Review Committee is conducting an inquiry into the participation of women. I think this is a useful initiative in an area where the Assembly could improve. Members of the Committee may be aware that when launching a number of Assembly events to mark the centenary of the female suffrage movement I publicly stated that I wanted to see a greater number of women elected to the Assembly in future. A number of initiatives have been conducted to encourage female involvement including through the Northern Ireland Legislative Strengthening Trust and Assembly Community Connect but this is an area where the Assembly needs to see improvement in future elections and I therefore think the Committee's initiative on this subject could be very significant.

In giving this matter consideration, I wanted to ensure that the Committee's attention is drawn to the initiative undertaken by my colleague Rosemary Butler, Presiding Officer of the National Assembly for Wales. Rosemary has spearheaded a campaign to encourage women to participate in all aspects of public life recognising that it may increase a greater pool of women interesting in considering entering elected politics. I have developed a very close working relationship with Rosemary and have had some valuable discussion with her on this issue. During our last meeting I made Rosemary aware of the Committee's upcoming inquiry and I have encouraged her to contribute. Subsequently, I am delighted to hear that the Committee is to visit Wales and meet with Rosemary.

As Speaker, I do have reservations that a man of my generation can credibly spearhead a similar campaign but at our last meeting I extended an invitation to Rosemary to come and deliver a lecture at Parliament Buildings to build on the work already done here and to act as another way to keep attention on the issue. It may not be possible for that to happen before the summer recess. However, I wanted to make sure the Committee was aware of the invitation in case it comes up and I am happy if the Committee wish to refer to it during the visit.

I hope the Committee finds this helpful and I look forward to seeing the outcome of the Committee's deliberations.

Yours sincerely,

WILLIAM HAY MLA

SP127_14

Call for Evidence - Stakeholder Letter



7 July 2014

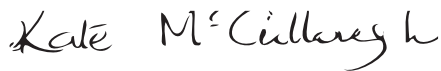
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Yours sincerely,



Kate McCullough

Assistant Assembly Clerk

Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 9052 1928 e-mail: committee.assemblyandexecutivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Call for Evidence - Letter to COFMdFM Chairperson



Mr Stephen Moutray
Chairperson
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
Stormont Estate
Ballymiscaw
Belfast BT4 3XX

Mr. Mike Nesbitt MLA,
Chairperson,
Committee for the Office for the First and Office of the deputy First Minister,
Room 285,
Parliament Buildings,
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If the Committee choose to respond I look forward to receiving your submission.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Stephen Moutray

Chairperson

Cc Karen Jardine, Clerk to the COFMdFM

Call for Evidence - Political Parties - Independents



7 July 2014

Dear

At its meeting on 24 June 2014, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee agreed the Terms of Reference for its Review of ***Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly***.

I now invite you to submit your views, using the 'Call for Evidence' pro forma (which includes the Terms of Reference for the Review), for the Committee's consideration.

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The deadline for the return of the Call for Evidence is **Wednesday, 3 September**.

Should you have any queries in relation to making a submission, please contact the Committee Clerk, whose contact details can be found at the end of the Call for Evidence pro forma.

On behalf of the Committee, I look forward to receiving your views.

Yours sincerely,



Mr Stephen Moutray

Chairperson

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 241, Parliament Buildings, Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX

Telephone: 028 9052 1928 e-mail: committee.assemblyandexecutivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Memo to Internal Stakeholders



Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 242
Parliament Buildings
Tel: 028 9052 1787
E-mail: john.simmons@niassembly.gov.uk

From: John Simmons
Clerk to Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Date: 28 August 2014

To: Kevin Shiels – Politics Plus
Louise Close – Outreach Manager
Ivor Gibson – NI Assembly Business Trust
Francis Lenaghan – Speaker's Office

As you may be aware, the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) is at present reviewing *Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly*.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/Terms-of-Reference/>

As part of the process of gathering information it is keen to ensure that the Review and its Report captures the main actions the Northern Ireland Assembly has taken in recent years or will be doing which impacts on women and politics - includes seminars, conferences, events and initiatives.

Can I please ask you to provide summary information you may hold in this regard which would be useful to refer to inform this Review.

Please forward this to kate.mccullough@niassembly.gov.uk by **Monday 15 September 2014**.

Happy to discuss.

Any queries to Kate McCullough at Ext. 29128.

John Simmons

Response - Politics Plus

From: Kevin Shiels, Politics Plus

Date: 3 September 2014

To: John Simmons
Clerk to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

I am responding to your minute of 28 August 2014 seeking summary information on the initiatives already taken or planned by Politics Plus to encourage or impact on Women in Politics.

The Purpose, Vision and Aims of Politics Plus are set out in the attached leaflet. As you will see, one of our Aims is to strengthen the role of women in political and public life.

Our MLAs, party support staff and our relevant Secretariat staff, regardless of gender, have benefited from all the general training and development modules provided to date by Politics Plus – such as media training, effective questioning in committees, understanding the legislation process, understanding public finance, and speech delivery. A range of continuous professional development modules, for all members and party support staff, will continue to be rolled out over the next 2 years at least now that we have received a further tranche of funding for our work.

However, in line with our Aim mentioned above about strengthening the role of women in political and public life, we have also run some developmental sessions and events aimed specifically at Women in Politics and at young women who have an interest in politics. I attach two flyers, for the information of your committee members, which will hopefully help explain these modules.

Under the auspices of Women in Politics, we delivered on request one-to-one coaching sessions for female MLAs during 2013. The coach has covered the topics listed in the Women in Politics flyer attached and our records indicate that 12 out of our 21 female MLAs have availed of at least one coaching session. A further 33 coaching sessions were delivered to female party support staff during 2013. Now that Politics Plus has acquired further funding it is intended to make additional coaching sessions available over the next 2 years at least.

Another strand of the Women in Politics programme was the organisation of study trips. There has been only one such trip organised to date (in November 2012). This involved a group of 9 female MLAs from across the parties visiting London for a full weekend of events geared towards the development of women in politics. A copy of the programme for that visit, including a TEDx Whitehall Women event, is attached for information. Politics Plus staff are currently planning 2 study trips (proposed for Spring and Autumn 2015) for our MLAs under the Women in Politics banner.

In October 2013 Politics Plus organised a PoP Up Political Academy for Young Women (aged 16-18) in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings. This attracted around 100 young women from schools in the Belfast area. Again a flyer for the event, a programme for the day and copy of the certificate awarded to attendees are attached for information. It is intended to run another similar-type event for young women in the coming months and possibly further events in 2015.

I trust this information will be helpful to the AERC but I would be happy to discuss any aspect further with you.

Kevin Shiels
Politics Plus

Outreach - Women in Politics

Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

The Northern Ireland Assembly (NIA) Outreach Unit is responsible for advancing and encouraging the public's understanding of the Assembly and the political process in Northern Ireland. It provides the business community, voluntary sector and delegations from across the world with the opportunity to engage and learn more about the legislature.

The Outreach Unit consists of three business areas:

Assembly Community Connect (ACC)

Assembly Community Connect was launched in May 2013 and works to enhance connections between the Assembly and the Community and Voluntary sector through education and outreach. Assembly Community Connect provides free training, information and support for the local community and voluntary sector.

Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust (NIABT)

Established in 2002 the NIABT aims to advance and encourage businesses' understanding of the Assembly and Assembly Members' understanding of business. Trust activities include NIABT Briefings, Fellowships and Inter-Parliamentary Education Programmes.

Parliamentary Outreach

Parliamentary Outreach has the responsibility for the organisation and management of programmes for international visitors to the NI Assembly. It also supports MLAs in their involvement with parliamentary bodies.

The Public Attitudes Survey 2009, commissioned to understand public attitudes towards the work of the Northern Ireland Assembly and to measure the level of public engagement with the Assembly, identified that women are one of the groups least engaged with the Assembly. Therefore, the Outreach Unit has focused on engaging with this group through its business, community and parliamentary outreach initiatives.

Since the start of the new mandate the Outreach Unit has hosted and attended 19 events specifically targeting women's groups to inform them about how they can get involved with the Assembly, the political process and political life. A detailed list of the events can be seen in **Annex A**. Additionally women's groups regularly take part in Assembly Community Connect monthly training.

Assembly Community Connect has also developed an active contact database of over 250 women's groups from across Northern Ireland that it engages with regularly to promote training opportunities and events which encourage greater participation of women in politics.

The Outreach Unit has also helped facilitate the Assembly's involvement in the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) group which is part of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA). The CWP was established to find ways to increase female representation in Parliament and works towards the mainstreaming of gender considerations in all CPA activities and programmes. Jo-Anne Dobson MLA stood for election for the role of Regional CWP Representative in 2013 but was unsuccessful; however she is a member of the CWP and attended the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Inaugural Conference, in March 2014, with the theme of Enhancing the Participation of Women in Politics.

The Assembly in conjunction with Belfast City Council, is also about to embark on a project with Cinemagic which will encourage young women to create a short film to inspire a new generation of young women to step up, participate and become leaders in public, political and civic life. Three teams will create a film that will educate, inform and inspire young women how to engage and influence the Northern Ireland political decision-making process.

The Head of Communications and Outreach is a member of WINNET – an organisation made up of senior women in leadership roles from all sectors in Northern Ireland. She sits on the network's media sub-committee which aim increase women's visibility in the media and to build experience and confidence for women participating in media interviews. The Network's mission statement is:

WINET is a cross-sector network of female leaders committed to the advancement of more women into leadership roles in Northern Ireland.

Annex A

Assembly Community Connect

Past women's events:

6 Jun 11 Leading Ladies (Attendees – 48)

Leading Ladies is an initiative developed within the Irish Peace Centres (IPC) Consortium. It is an event-based training that brings together small numbers of women from throughout Belfast from all walks of life, to meet some of Ireland's leading ladies.

The Outreach Unit worked with Leading Ladies to host an event to encourage women to get involved in political life. The group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a round table discussion with female MLAs, sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in political and public life, and a tour of Parliament Buildings

21 Nov 11 Women into Public Life (Attendees – 16) and 20 Mar 12 Women into Public Life (Attendees – 42)

Women into Public Life (WIPL) is a unique partnership project between three women's organisations, Foyle Women's Information Network (FWIN), Derry/Londonderry, Second Chance Education Project for Women (SCEPW), County Donegal and Engender in Scotland. WIPL aims to address the continuing under representation of women in decision making fora and to influence the development of policies to address this issue.

The Outreach Unit worked with Women into Public Life to host an event to encourage women to get involved in political life. The group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a round table discussion with female MLAs, sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in political and public life, and a tour of Parliament Buildings

13 Nov 12 Women in Society (Attendees – 30)

The overall aim of the project is to continue good relations built between women aged 50 + across Ballysillan, Ligoniel and Oldpark. The project will look at women in specialised roles in Northern & Southern Ireland.

The Assembly Outreach worked with Women in Society to host an event to encourage women to get involved in political life. The group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a round table discussion with female MLAs, sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in the political and public life, and a tour of Parliament Buildings

5 Feb 13 Women Leading the Way (Attendees – 22)

A group of women made up of cross community, cross sector and a small number of German Muslims. Most have never visited Stormont before and are keen to learn the basics about decision making, women's role and how the Assembly works.

This group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a tour of Parliament Buildings, a meeting with the Speaker – William Hay MLA and a speed networking session with female MLAs sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in the political and public life.

10 Sep 13 Foyle Women's Information Event (Attendees – 200) and

4 Sep 14 Foyle Women's Information Network (Attendees – 200)

The aim of this event was to inform women at grassroots level about the range of services, support, advice and training that is available to them by the Assembly.

Assembly Community Connect hosted an information stand providing information on how women's groups can get involved with the Assembly and the political process.

11 Sep 13 Women & Leadership Programme (Attendees – 11)

This event involved a group of women from North Belfast who are completing a Women and Leadership Programme.

This group received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation, a tour of Parliament Buildings, a speed networking session with female MLAs sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in political and public life.

5 Mar 14 Footprints Womens Centre (Attendees – 20)

Footprints Women's Centre has provided services for women within the Colin Neighbourhood since 1991. Responding to the needs of local women and their families, Footprints Women's Centre has filled recognised gaps and offers a relaxing and welcoming environment, where local women are encouraged and supported to build self-esteem, confidence and develop skills through participation in the range of programmes and activities on offer.

As part of the International Women's Day series of events, Assembly Community Connect visited Footprints Women's Centre and delivered the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation to the group to provide information on how they can get involved in the Assembly and the encourage them to get involved with the political process.

6 Mar 14 Shankill Women's Centre (Attendees – 30)

Shankill Women's Centre formed in 1987, is located in a disadvantaged ward in North Belfast. It arose because of an expressed local need for women specific education, support and training.

As part of the International Women's Day series of events, Assembly Community Connect visited Shankill Women's Centre and delivered the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation to the group to provide information on how they can get involved in the Assembly and the encourage them to get involved with the political process.

13 Mar 14 NI Rural Women's Network (Attendees – 130)

The Northern Ireland Assembly Community Connect Team was invited to attend the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN) International Women's Day. This cross community event, funded by the Community Relations Council, was held at Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown.

Assembly Community Connect hosted an information stand to provide information on how women's groups can get involved with the Assembly and the political process.

20 Mar 14 Women & Peace Building (Attendees – 300)

'Sharing the Learning' Conference - involving participation of international guests from the Foundations for Peace network.

Assembly Community Connect was invited to attend the conference. The Assembly had an information stand at this event to provide information on how women's groups can get involved with the Assembly and the political process.

Upcoming events:

15 Oct 14 Rural Women's Network (Attendees – Approx. 150)

NIRWN will celebrate International Rural Women's Day in Parliament Buildings, Belfast, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Assembly through Assembly Community Connect.

This group will receive the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation and take part in a speed networking session with female MLAs sharing experiences on women in public life and talking about women's under-representation in political and public life. They will also receive a presentation on the inquiry process and practical advice for responding to inquiries to encourage participation.

NIABT

Past women's events:

16 September 2010 Women in Leadership Seminar (Attendees – 60)

Organised in partnership with the Institute of Directors, women from the businesses across Northern Ireland attended. Women in leadership positions from the business sector and politics spoke about their roles in public life and how important it is for women to have a voice in the NIABT and NI Assembly.

11 March 2013 Women in Business Event (Attendees – 35)

Organised in partnership with Women in Business, women from the business sector received the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation and took part in a speed networking session with female MLAs, sharing the experiences and challenges women face in public life and how important it is for women to have a voice in the NIABT and NI Assembly.

15 May 2014 International Business Women's Conference Women in Philanthropy Breakfast & Networking Walk (Attendees – 40)

The NIABT hosted a session during the Women in Business, International Business Women's Conference 2014. Women from Northern Ireland and across the world attended this breakfast event, which aimed to inspire women.

Upcoming events:

27 January 2015 Women in Business Event (Attendees – Approx. 50)

To be organised in partnership with the Institute of Directors and Women in Business, women from the business sector will receive the 'How the Assembly Works' presentation and take part in a speed networking session with female MLAs, sharing the experiences and challenges women face in public life and how important it is for women to have a voice in the NIABT and NI Assembly.

Parliamentary Outreach

14th March 2011 Commonwealth Day (Attendees – 61)

Women, from a variety of backgrounds, with connections to the Commonwealth spoke to invited guests on the subject of 'Women as Agents of Change'. Attendees included children from local secondary schools and representatives from Commonwealth connected community groups.

23rd May 2013 Visit by Jessica Grounds (Attendees – 9)

The Assembly hosted a visit by Ms Grounds, the Executive Director of Running Start, a non-profit organisation that she co-founded which inspires girls and young women to run for elected office. Jessica is also the founder and principal strategist for Solid Grounds Strategy, a firm she created to consult women candidates who have never run for office before. In 2010, she co-founded Women's Campaign Consortium, a collaboration of female campaign consultants dedicated to serving women candidates.

Ms Grounds visited Dublin and Belfast in a week-long visit to discuss her work and to find out more about the role of women in politics in Northern Ireland. During her visit to Northern Ireland Ms Grounds met MLAs to discuss how to encourage women into politics and public life.

19th May 2014 Visit by Mexico Electoral Office (Attendees – 7)

Elections to the European Parliament took place in Northern Ireland on 22 May 2014. The delegation from INE were in Northern Ireland to participate in a joint mission to observe these elections alongside members of the School of Politics, International Studies and Philosophy at Queen's University Belfast. The mission had a gender focus, aiming to observe the effect of key aspects of the electoral administration, political context and institutional arrangements that affect women's participation and representation in Belfast.

During their visit to Northern Ireland they met MLAs to discuss the issues of women's participation and representation in Northern Ireland.

Speaker's Office Response

Kate

In response to John's memo dated 28 August 2014 the Speaker has undertaken or will undertake the following events highlighting the role of women:

13 March 2010

St Patrick's Day Event – Recognising the Contribution of Women to the Life of Northern Ireland

3 June 2013

"Perspectives On" Lecture Series - Lecture by Dr Margaret Ward on the Womens Suffrage Movement

25 September 2014

"Encouraging Female Participation in Public Life" – A conversation with Dame Rosemary Butler AM, Presiding Officer, National Assembly for Wales

If you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards

Frances

Programme – Roundtable Event

Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

The Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings

Thursday 23 October 2014

PROGRAMME

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 10.15 | Registration – Tea/Coffee |
| 10.45 | Opening remarks by Junior Ministers Jennifer McCann MLA and Jonathan Bell MLA (or ending event) (tbc) |
| 10.55 | <i>Welcome – setting the scene</i> Stephen Moutray MLA, AERC Chairperson |
| 11.00 | Presentation 1

What kind of initiatives, including ‘positive actions’ should the NI Assembly consider? - <i>Introduced by Evelyn Collins CBE, Equality Commission for Northern Ireland</i> |
| 11.05 | Roundtable Discussions |
| 11.20 | Presentation 2

What could Political Parties do to strengthen their policies on women and politics? – <i>introduced by Fidelma Ashe, Senior Lecturer in Politics, University of Ulster</i> |
| 11.25 | Roundtable Discussions |
| 11.40 | Presentation 3

What is the Government doing to encourage more women into politics and decision making? – <i>Introduced by Patricia Carey, Gender Unit, OFMdFM</i> |
| 11.45 | Roundtable Discussions |
| 12.00 | Presentation 4

What did the Local Council Staff Commission for NI do for women in Local Councils? – <i>Introduced by Diane Stewart, Senior Advisor, Local Government Staff Commission for NI</i> |
| 12.05 | Roundtable Discussions |
| 12.20 | Closing Remarks

■ Megan Fearon MLA
■ Sandra Overend MLA
■ Paula Bradley MLA
■ Dolores Kelly MLA
■ Anna Lo MLA |
| 12.30 | Lunch |

Roundtable Event - letter to stakeholders



Committee Office,
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
BELFAST BT4 3XX

Tel No: 028 9052 1735

E-mail: committee.assembly&executivereview@niassembly.gov.uk

Date: 07/10/2014

Dear Stakeholder

Re: Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) - Review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly

The Assembly and Executive Review Committee is currently undertaking a review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly – see terms of reference and ‘*Call for Evidence*’ etc. on AERC website at <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/>

In order to analyse, focus and further inform the Committee on the evidence received from the responses to the ‘*Call for Evidence*’ and the oral evidence to date (including the Committee’s study visits to Wales and Iceland), the Committee has agreed to hold an event on the morning of **Thursday 23 October 2014** in the Long Gallery in Parliament Buildings to engage AERC Members and other politicians directly with key stakeholder organisations in Northern Ireland and beyond on the main issues arising in this Review.

One of the key objectives of this engagement is to assist Members prioritise the key actions / recommendations in the Committee’s final Report on this Review.

On behalf of the Committee I would like to invite up to **two** members of your organisation to participate in this event. The programme for the event is attached and sets out the subject of each of the four key topics arising from this Review.

If your organisation is willing to participate in this event please can you confirm by completing the attached registration form and return to jim.nulty@niassembly.gov.uk or to the above address by **Tuesday 14 October 2014**.

Please do not hesitate to ring myself (telephone 028 90 5 21787) or Kate McCullough (Assistant Clerk – 028 90 5 21928) if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Claire McCanny

Senior Assistant Clerk to the Committee

Junior Ministers response



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Deputy First Minister**

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Mr Stephen Moutray MLA
Chairperson
Assembly & Executive Review Committee
Committee Office
Room 241
Parliament Buildings
BELFAST
BT4 3XX

Our Ref: INV/585/2014

15 October 2014

Dear Mr Moutray

Thank you for your letter dated 9 October 2014, inviting us to make a few remarks at the Assembly and Executive Review Committee's engagement event as part of its review of Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

We would be delighted to make a few remarks. A Diary Secretary will be in contact shortly to make the necessary arrangements.

JONATHAN BELL MLA
Junior Minister

JENNIFER McCANN MLA
Junior Minister

Invitee List - Roundtable Event

Eileen Bell	Women in to Politics
Meadhbh Bermingham	Youth Action NI
Krystyne Borland	World Wide Women
Cllr Paula Bradshaw	Alliance Party
Annie Campbell	Womens Aid Federation Northern Ireland
Lynn Carvill	Womens Tec
Alice Chapman OBE	Northern Ireland Womens European Platform
Claire Choulavong	BME Women Network
Catherine Cooke	Foyle Womens Information Network
Cllr Mark Cosgrove	Newtownabbey Borough Council
Louise Coyle	Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network
Cllr Laura Devlin	Down District Council
Alderman Jim Dillon	Lisburn Borough Council
Cllr Freda Donnelly	Armagh City and District Council
Ellie Drake	NUS-USI
Gordon Dunne	DUP
Cllr Catherine Elatter	Magherafelt District Council
Cllr Gillian Fitzpatrick	Down District Council
Maureen Fox	Foyle Womens Information Network
Cllr Mandy Girvan	Newtownabbey Borough Council
Rebecca Hall	NUS-USI
Cllr Patrice Hardy	Mid and East Antrim Shadow Council
Alderman Arnold Hatch	Craigavon Borough Council
Orlaith Hendron	Womens Resource and Development Agency
Bronagh Hinds	DemocraShe
John Keanie	Commissioner for Public Appointments
Michelle O'Donnell Keating	Women for Election
Roseann Kelly	Women in Business
Louise Kennedy	Womens Aid Federation Northern Ireland
Dr Adrian Kerr	Local Government Staff Commission NI
Liz Law	Equality Commission
Maria Lorencio	World Wide Women
Roisin Mallon	Equality Commission
Cllr Nuala McAllister	Alliance Party
Megan McCabe	Youth Action NI
Caroline McCord	Womens Information Northern Ireland
Claire McGing	Maynooth University
Anne McVicker	Womens Resource and Development Agency
Irene Miskimmon	Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
Victoria Montgomery	Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics at Queen's University
John Mooney	Training for Women Network
Clare Moore	ICTU
Catherine Morgan	Youth Action NI

Jenny Muir	Green Party
Pat Neeson	Commissioner for Public Appointments
Gail Neill	Youth Action NI
Deirdre Nic Fhinn	5050 Group
Paula Rayman	Centre for the Advancement of Women in Politics at Queen's University
Danielle Roberts	Belfast Feminist Network
Cllr Noelle Robinson	Green Party
Cllr Patricia Rogers	Fermanagh and Omagh Council
Dr David Russell	Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
Leanne Rutledge	DUP
Cllr Catherine Seeley	Craigavon Borough Council
Paddy Skates	Women's Forum NI
Karen Smyth	NILGA
Alderman Christopher Stalford	Belfast City Council
Elizabeth Thompson	Training for Women Network
June Trimble	Youth Action NI
Frances Wong	Orient Chinese Women's Group
Laura Wylie	Youth Action NI
Patrick Yu	NICEM

Briefing Paper for Stakeholders - Roundtable Event

Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Inquiry Event – Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly
Thursday 23 October 2014 – Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings
10.15-13.00pm

Draft Briefing Note for Stakeholders

Since the decision by the Committee in April 2014 to *Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly* the Inquiry has resulted in the Assembly and Executive Review Committee calling for oral and written evidence (the written was through the 'Call for Evidence' questionnaire), it has also commissioned research papers and has visited 2 legislatures who implement policies, initiatives and legislation for the Committee to consider.

To review the evidence to date please go to the webpages of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee where you will also find the Terms of Reference.

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/>

Attached is a page which contains a breakdown of four key areas which has been presented to the Committee in the evidence to date.

The four areas are:

1. Barriers and challenges
2. Good Models of Practice
3. Positive Action
4. Initiatives / Programmes

This Inquiry Event is an opportunity to ensure that the Committee has heard all the evidence in relation to these key areas in order to be able to make recommendations in its Review Report.

You will hear four speakers whose role is to prompt a 15 minute discussion at your allocated roundtable. This will be facilitated by a Chairperson (an MLA) and a Rapporteur who will capture the main points of the discussion to be used by the Committee in its decision of what recommendations it will make in its Review Report.

Gendered Candidate Selection and the Representation of Women in NI

Parliamentary Affairs Advance Access published November 11, 2012

Parliamentary Affairs (2012) 1–30

doi:10.1093/pa/gss079

Gendered Candidate Selection and the Representation of Women in Northern Ireland

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In an attempt to account for the exceptionally low levels of female representation in Northern Ireland, this paper provides an analysis of the contemporary candidate selection procedures of the region's five main political parties. Drawing on evidence gathered from 29 elite interviews, plus official internal party documents, the study finds that the localised nature of the parties' selection procedures may disadvantage women aspirants. Also important are 'supply-side' factors influencing legislative recruitment and female participation rates, namely the strongly embedded social norm of female domestic responsibility, a masculinised political culture and the lack of confidence of potential female candidates.

Despite greater moves towards achieving gender equality in other spheres (Inglehart and Norris, 2003, pp. 3–7; Scott *et al.*, 2010) the political under-representation of women in modern states persists, with the most recent estimate showing that women comprise just 19.8% of the world's parliamentarians (IPU, 2012). Accounting for such disparity is a complex and difficult task. The literature suggests that political gender inequality is essentially a multi-dimensional crisis, forged by a medley of cultural, socioeconomic and political forces (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995) which often combine or overlap and can differ in respective strength in individual case studies (see Galligan and Tremblay, 2005; Sawyer *et al.*, 2006; Gelb and Palley, 2010). Unsurprisingly, such convolution poses a problem for analysts when determining causality, as Tremblay (2008, p. 9) asks: 'do cultural factors precede socioeconomic and political factors, or is it the opposite?' In the last two decades, however, a global research trend has emerged that asserts the primacy of political or institutional factors—such as electoral systems, party organisation or party procedures for the selection of candidates—over cultural and socio-economic variables in producing and maintaining political gender inequality (Lovenduski and Norris, 1994; Inglehart and

Norris, 2003, p. 132; Caul Kittelson, 2006; Dahlerup, 2006; Tremblay, 2008, p. 15). As Stokes (2005, p. 63) explains: 'In the search for understanding why there are relatively few women elected to the majority of parliaments, analysis from around the world comes down firmly on the side of political factors'.

This trend is certainly evident in the case of the UK (Mackay, 2004, p. 103), where comparatively extensive attention has been paid to the key institutional variable of candidate selection. In a comprehensive summary of the research conducted on gender and political representation in the UK, Mackay (2004) shows that from the mid-1990s onwards political parties have assumed 'centre stage' (p. 105) in the search for understanding political gender inequality, with several studies focused exclusively on how 'gender plays out in the seemingly gender-neutral institutions, practices and rules that comprise candidate selection' (see Squires and Wickham-Jones, 2001; Elgood *et al.*, 2002; Shepherd-Robinson and Lovenduski, 2002; Mackay, 2004, p. 106). Sustained in part by the wider debate on the role and impact of gender quotas (Hazan and Rahat, 2010, pp. 5–6), as well as the signing of the 2002 Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act which permits the use of equality guarantees by political parties (Childs, 2002), gendered candidate selection represents a vibrant sub-topic within the UK representation literature. Several studies have analysed the selection procedures adopted by parties in England, Scotland and Wales in respect of the low levels of female representatives (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993; Bradbury *et al.*, 2000; Harrison, 2005; Campbell *et al.*, 2006; Evans, 2008; Childs *et al.*, 2008) and a more recent House of Commons Speaker's report on political representation further highlighted the culpability of the main British political parties' selection procedures in maintaining political gender inequality.¹

Absent from the UK literature, however, is a gendered analysis of the contemporary candidate selection procedures adopted by the main political parties in Northern Ireland. The few studies which have addressed candidate selection (or legislative recruitment) in the region interrogate party commitments to intra-party gender recognition strategies (Wilford and Galligan, 1999; Ward, 2004), such as the implementation of positive discrimination measures (Miller *et al.*, 1996), as opposed to how the procedural 'demands' or institutional makeup of selection might affect the levels of female candidates. Furthermore, attempts to account for the levels of female political representation focus primarily on the systemic obstacles, or 'the opportunity/constraint structure' (Wilford, 1999, p. 84), which determine the 'supply' of women candidates. Foremost among these 'supply-side' obstacles are an aggressive, masculinised political culture and the

¹House of Commons Speaker's Conference (on Parliamentary Representation), paragraph 11, p. 48. Final report published 11 January 2010, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/spconf/239/23902.htm>.

prevalence of traditional conservative gender-based social roles. That so little attention has been paid to the parties' selection methods is surprising, not least because of the well-established link between candidate selection and representation (Crotty, 1968, p. 20; Gallagher and Marsh, 1988, pp. 12–14; Caul-Kittelton, 2006, p. 2; Hazan and Rahat, 2010, p. 107). As is the case in most modern democratic countries, Northern Ireland's political parties exercise virtually unrivalled control over legislative recruitment. Through their role as 'gatekeepers' they determine not only the volume of candidates but also the identity of those standing for election, acting as 'the true superintendents of the parliamentary representation of women' (Tremblay, 2008, p. 12). In short, candidate selection represents an important point of inquiry for those interested in improving levels of female representation in Northern Ireland.

This study, therefore, addresses this need for a procedural, gendered analysis of candidate selection in the case of Northern Ireland by casting new light on the selection procedures implemented by the five main political parties in the region. The adopted approach—one utilised to great effect in other 'neo-institutional' studies of candidate selection and elite recruitment (see Gallagher and Marsh, 1988; Caul-Kittelton, 2006; Kenig, 2009*a,b*; Hazan and Rahat, 2010)—focuses on certain key aspects of the methods of selection in Northern Ireland in a bid to determine whether they might disadvantage female aspirants and serve to replicate gendered representation patterns. These include candidacy requirements, the inclusivity of the selectorate and the decentralised nature of selection. The study also interrogates potential 'supply-side' problems, most notably the cultural context which may hinder female participation in politics.

1. Data

This paper draws on data gathered from 29 semi-structured, elite interviews conducted in 2009 with elected representatives and party officials from Northern Ireland's five main political parties. Those interviewed included 7 from the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin, respectively, 5 from the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP), 6 from the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and 4 from Alliance. The sample contained 12 local councillors, 11 MLAs, 5 senior party officials and 1 non-elected party representative. The gender breakdown was 22 women and 7 men. Although the primary focus of the study is on women's experiences with candidate selection, a decision was taken to interview men who were uniquely positioned to provide in-depth information on the selection process. On average, interviews lasted approximately 1 hour and, in an attempt to encourage candid discussion about the issue of gender discrimination and other potential discrepancies at the stage of selection, those interviewed were assured of anonymity. Previous studies of candidate

selection detail a notoriously secretive process with respondents often reluctant to discuss what is regarded as a sensitive intra-party matter (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988; Lundell, 2004, p. 26). Furthermore, political elites in Northern Ireland have been shown to be preternaturally 'defensive' in the face of external scrutiny or requests for intra-party information (McEvoy, 2006). This study, therefore, focused on a potentially obstinate research topic: one in which a universally secretive process is policed by especially tight-lipped elites. Finally, as well as interview data, the study also utilises information on selection contained in party rulebooks obtained by the author from official party sources in 2009.

2. Extent of female under-representation in Northern Ireland

As Table 1 clearly shows, female under-representation is entrenched across all levels of government in Northern Ireland. At a district council level, 23% of available seats are currently held by women (Ark, 2011). Indeed, in local government contests between 1993 and 2011 only 17.6% of those elected have been women, with none of the main parties achieving a gender balance. Gender inequality has proved even more fixed in higher office. For instance, the recent 2010 general election saw women secure 4 of the 18 Westminster seats; a record return construed by some commentators as a success for those pursuing gender equality (Tonge and Evans, 2010, p. 744). Lauding such a result is justified on the grounds that it virtually doubled the overall number of women elected to Westminster since 1983 to nine, a paltry 7.3% of MPs. Furthermore, of the UK's

Table 1. Female elected representatives in Northern Ireland 1983–2011 (% total number of elected representatives per party)

Party	Local government (1993–2011) <i>n</i> (%)	NI assembly (1998–2011) <i>n</i> (%)	Westminster (1983–2010) ^a <i>n</i> (%)	European Parliament (1984–2009) <i>n</i> (%)
DUP	107 (15.7)	11 (8.9)	2 (6.1)	1 (16.7)
Sinn Féin	106 (21.3)	27 (27.3)	2 (11.1)	2 (100)
UUP	103 (13.7)	6 (6.7)	2 (4.3)	0 (0)
SDLP	121 (21.9)	15 (20.8)	1 (5)	0 (0)
Alliance	61 (32.6)	7 (25.9)	1 (100)	0 (0)
Other	14 (5.8)	3 (14.3)	1 (25)	0 (0)
Total	512 (17.6)	69 (16)	9 (7.3)	3 (16.7)

Source: Author's calculations based on the information available at <https://www.ark.ac.uk>.

^aIncluding UUP as UCUNF in 2010 general election.

four devolved regions, Northern Ireland is rooted to the bottom of the gender league table. In the current regional Assembly only 20 (18.5%) seats are held by women (Ark, 2011). Despite the optimism of some accounts (Barnett Donaghy, 2004, pp. 30–32), the anticipated positive effects of devolution, as clearly evidenced in post-devolution Scotland and Wales (Sawer *et al.*, 2006), have largely failed to emerge in Northern Ireland. Four Assembly elections have seen 69 women elected, just 16% of the total number of MLAs overall.² At the European Parliamentary level women have also struggled for representation, making up just 16.7% of MEPs between 1984 and 2009. Sinn Féin's 100% female representation at this level is remarkable, with Bairbre de Brún the party's sole MEP since 2004.³ A final point worthy of note is the clear difference that exists between the main parties in terms of female representation. There is a neat ethno-national split, with the two unionist parties, the DUP and UUP, trailing behind their nationalist counterparts, Sinn Féin and the SDLP. This split is particularly stark at the Assembly level, with the combined number of female nationalist MLAs (42) more than double that of the two unionist parties (17). The party with the best overall record on women's representation is the non-confessional Alliance Party.

Looking beyond the composition of government, the figures on female representatives are largely mirrored by the number of women candidates selected to contest elections in Northern Ireland (Table 2). Over a substantial time period the total percentage of female candidates at each of the four levels of government falls below 20%. In local government elections—a crucial entry point for those seeking future selection and election to higher office—women have comprised just 19.4% of candidates, with the UUP posting the worst record (15.2%) and the Alliance Party the best (33.4%). In the four Assembly elections to date, just 17.1% of candidates have been female. At Westminster and European elections women have also represented just 15.9 and 17.4% of approved candidates, respectively—percentages which are somewhat inflated by female candidates independent of the five main parties. Again, across all four levels, there is a clear difference in terms of female candidacy between the unionist and nationalist parties. This is perhaps best represented by figures from Assembly elections, with the DUP and UUP's combined tally of 32 female candidates less than half that of Sinn Féin and the SDLP's sum (67).

²These figures are correct at election; no account is taken of substitution or cooption between elections.

³Bairbre De Brún was replaced by Martina Anderson in May 2012, continuing Sinn Féin's 100% record at European level.

Table 2. Female candidates in Northern Ireland elections 1983–2011 (% total number of electoral candidates)

Party	Local government (1993–2011) <i>n</i> (%)	NI assembly (1998–2011) <i>n</i> (%)	Westminster (1983–2010) <i>n</i> (%)	European Parliament (1984–2009) <i>n</i> (%)
DUP	166 (17.4)	20 (12.3)	5 (6.1)	1 (16.7)
Sinn Féin	158 (22.6)	38 (25)	14 (12.5)	3 (37.5)
UUP	161 (15.2)	12 (7.6)	7 (6.4)	0 (0)
SDLP	197 (24.7)	29 (21.2)	23 (20)	0 (0)
Alliance	117 (33.4)	28 (33.7)	25 (24.8)	1 (20)
Other	131 (13.9)	48 (14.4)	39 (20.4)	5 (19.2)
Total	930 (19.4)	175 (17.1)	113 (15.9)	10 (17.5)

Source: Author's calculations based on the information available at: <https://www.ark.ac.uk/>.

3. Candidate selection methods of Northern Ireland's political parties

Beginning with the degree of formality afforded to the selection process—a criterion identified in other similar studies (Gallagher and Marsh, 1988)—each of the parties possessed an official set of internal rules on selection which were standardised and implemented by party officials. Without exception, those interviewed made reference to a bureaucratised process with a transparent set format. Some respondents explained that, while ostensibly formalised, the process in the past has occasionally proved rather 'laissez-faire' (male UUP representative, interview, 27 July 2009) or has been 'short-circuited' (female DUP councillor (1), interview, 16 July 2009) to suit practical circumstances. Importantly, such inconsistency in observing formal guidelines was not considered a gendered obstacle by respondents. Instead these deviations were framed as acceptable and almost inevitable, affecting all candidates equally regardless of gender.

In terms of candidacy eligibility, full-party membership with relevant fees paid was a criteria set by each of the parties for prospective candidates. Alliance and Sinn Féin were the only parties who specified a required length of membership before a candidate could seek selection, 6 weeks and 12 months, respectively. Three of the parties—Alliance, UUP and Sinn Féin—also specified that in exceptional circumstances special dispensation could be made for non-members seeking selection. In terms of candidate profile none of the parties set any guidelines that either restricted or facilitated aspirants on gender grounds. An additional requirement contained in the Alliance, UUP and Sinn Féin constitutions was that prospective candidates sign a written pledge before seeking selection.

These pledges serve a dual purpose: to ensure candidates possess a degree of ideological affinity with the party and that they adhere to the party whip if elected. Although not specified in the party rulebook, the DUP has also introduced a similar requirement in the past (Gormley-Heenan and McGinty, 2008, p. 55), and pre-election contracts are a common feature of parties in the Republic of Ireland (Hazan and Rahat, 2010, p. 26). For the purpose of this study, none of those interviewed suggested that candidacy eligibility was a factor in explaining the low levels of female candidates or that supplementary requirements existed in addition to formal party rules. The foremost hurdle to candidacy concerns party membership and even that may be circumvented on occasion. In short, it is difficult to square the low levels of female candidates in Northern Ireland with the inclusive candidacy requirements set by the main political parties.

Notably, none of the parties' constitutions outlined a specific hustings format. Previous studies elsewhere have drawn attention to gender discrimination at this stage in the process, highlighting inconsistency or a gendered bias in the questions posed of female candidates (Shvedova, 1998, p. 46; Elgood *et al.*, 2002). However, respondents from all parties outlined a standard practice in which prospective candidates deliver a speech or presentation to the members in attendance and then answer questions from the floor. There was an admission that hustings can be a 'nerve wracking' (female DUP councillor (2), interview, 16 July 2009) or 'intimidating' experience (female SDLP councillor, interview, 24 July 2009). When asked to consider whether this format militated against female candidates in particular, however, respondents answered with an emphatic 'no'. One female Alliance MLA explained: 'Standing up in public and making an argument as to why you should be the candidate can be a very difficult thing for anyone to do. I don't think it is particular to being a woman' (interview, 11 June 2009). Another female DUP councillor stressed: 'a lot of the issues that happen are just general human nature issues. It is not gender specific ... To lay all that at the gender door I think isn't right' (interview (2), 16 July 2009). It appears, from the information gathered in the interviews, that any claim of explicit gender bias at the hustings stage in Northern Ireland is unsubstantiated. The vast majority of respondents defended their selection procedures from any accusation of gender bias, providing little evidence of explicit gender discrimination on the part of the selectorate.

The absence of explicit gender discrimination at the hustings stage, however, does not rule out the possibility that discrimination manifests itself implicitly. Studies conducted elsewhere reveal how ostensibly gender-neutral recruitment processes are in actual practice gendered, as male characteristics are emphasised and often become the criteria in selecting candidates (Randall, 1987; Lovenduski and Norris, 1989; Shepherd-Robinson and Lovenduski, 2002; Krook, 2009). These masculinist norms and values exhibit a powerful discriminatory effect,

with party selectorates conditioned to regard women as unsuitable for public office. In the British context, Chapman (1993) illustrated how the typical profile of women candidates resembled those of 'losing men', while in a more recent study Evans documented how female aspirants in the Liberal Democrats, 'were expected to conform to certain male stereotypes of the role of politician' (2008, p. 599). Given that the women interviewed for this study were successful candidates it is difficult to arrive at a confident conclusion as to the masculinist attitudes, values and priorities of party selectorates in Northern Ireland. Future research should, therefore, focus on what Norris and Lovenduski dub 'the experience of losers' (1995, p. 12), profiling unsuccessful female candidates in the region's parties. What this study does provide, however, is some insight into how the perceived norms and values of party selectorates help determine the supply of female aspirants. Crucially, the male-gendered norms and values supposedly prized by selectorates are believed to impinge negatively on the numbers of women seeking selection. Female aspirants internalise the male-ordered assumptions underpinning candidate recruitment. This is central to Norris' consideration of 'feedback', whereby if successful candidates seem mainly affluent, white, male, middle-class professionals, those who do not fit this category may be discouraged from applying, on the grounds that they may be unlikely to succeed (1993, p. 329–30). The issue of supply in the case of Northern Ireland is explored in greater depth below.

4. Democratic Unionist Party

Selection in the DUP is a primarily localised process with intermittent central party involvement. For District Council and Westminster contests, selection is performed exclusively by members of the party in the relevant constituency using a secret ballot vote. Only full members of the party, as defined by the party rules, are entitled to vote. There is no vetting of candidates by any central agent prior to a selection meeting; those who satisfy the candidacy criteria are deemed eligible to seek selection. As one respondent said of the process: 'It is very much grass-roots membership picking who they want to represent them in any given level' (female DUP councillor, interview, 2 July 2009). In a final stage of selection, candidates are then ratified by the party's Central Executive Committee (CEC).

For Assembly contests, the DUP's process differs slightly in that there is greater room for central party involvement. In a constituency where the party has opted to field multiple candidates, guidelines allow for the CEC to select one candidate only and the Constituency Association no less than one candidate (DUP, 2009: Rule 16b). A secret ballot majority vote cast by full DUP members determines the Assembly candidate(s) selected by the Constituency Association. When

asked about this degree of involvement by central office, DUP respondents explained it was a measure designed to ensure the most high-profile candidates are safely selected, such as sitting MPs:

It is to stop a situation which could happen with everybody going to a meeting and everybody voting for the weaker candidate because they think the MP is home and dry. [You] have to ensure that your high-profile people are there to bring others [running mates] in [elected] with you. (male DUP MLA, interview, 30 June 2009)

Another of those interviewed explained how the inclusion of this CEC 'wild-card' candidate was to accelerate selection of what is in betting terms a sure-thing (i.e. a high-profile incumbent). It was also framed as a protective measure to avoid 'the machinations where people group together to keep other folks out. It means that if somebody deserves to be there and is being shafted . . . there is a mechanism in place to make sure that [doesn't happen]' (female DUP councillor (2), interview, 16 July 2009). It is evident then that such a practice is designed to primarily benefit incumbents. Crucially, when the majority of incumbents are male, as is the case with the DUP, incumbency can represent a significant obstacle to enhancing representation (Hazan and Rahat, 2010, p. 113). On this point, the granting of 'automatic candidacy' to incumbents in the DUP has served to reinforce gender inequality amongst its electoral candidates at a Assembly level.

A final facet of selection worthy of note is that the DUP issues 'Party Guidelines on Gender' applicable to all selection meetings. These state that: 'there should be a representative character to every group and committee formed by its members' and that 'unless there are extenuating circumstances, it is not expected that any Association would nominate representatives from one gender only' (DUP, 2009: Rule 18). The affirmative nature of these guidelines is, however, tempered by the clarification that any gendered awareness 'should not be at the expense of the merit principle'.

5. Sinn Féin

According to formal party guidelines, Sinn Féin conducts a multi-stage selection process which could be categorised as localised recruitment (Sinn Féin, 2009: Rule 10). Each of those interviewed from the party stressed that selection was ultimately determined by '[the] people on the floor' (Sinn Féin party officer, interview, 9 July 2009). However, some evidence did emerge to suggest that the extent of central party involvement can at times prove considerable. Responsibility for the conduct of elections at all levels lies with the relevant Comhairle Cuige (Regional Executive) which summons a selection convention, the guidelines of which are subject to instruction from An Ard Chomhairle (National Executive).

The selection convention is overseen by an independent agent, appointed by central office, with candidates elected by full party members of the relevant constituency using secret ballot. All candidates are then subject to ratification by the National Executive.

It is at the point of ratification where Sinn Féin adopts the most strident approach to ensuring gender equality of any of Northern Ireland's main parties and also where we are afforded a glimpse of the influence of central office in the process. Although not specified in the party constitution, according to those interviewed (including two well-placed party officers), Sinn Féin is committed to achieving a minimum target of 30% for female candidates contesting winnable seats. This setting of a desirable target coincides with the party's overall commitment to achieving gender equality in elections to party positions, which includes gender equality provisos for every internal election and an imposed 50–50 gender balance on its National Executive. Several of those interviewed stressed how this minimum target was a key consideration when ratifying proposed candidates and failure to satisfy this requirement has led to the rejection of candidate lists in the past (Sinn Féin party officer, interview, 9 July 2009).

There appears, therefore, a willingness within Sinn Féin's central office to address political gender inequality, reflected in the party's high numbers of female elected representatives and candidates in comparison with its political rivals. The use of such measures also belies a comparatively substantial degree of centralised control of selection to its electoral rivals. In this respect Sinn Féin is somewhat atypical of the majority of contemporary British and Irish parties, who, as studies have revealed, initiate highly localised selection processes (Denver, 1988; Hopkin, 2001, p. 350; Galligan, 2003). By extension, for those interested in intra-party power dynamics (of which candidate selection is a prime indicator) central interference in recruitment also suggests a high level of compliance or subservience amongst Sinn Féin party members. Those interviewed registered little unease with central party occasionally interfering in a process devolved to the local party level. Nor, when pressed, did they allude to any widespread discontent among the party membership with such measures.

6. Social Democratic and Labour Party

Selection in the SDLP is a local affair. The guidelines contained in the party constitution and evidence from interviews indicated a multi-stage process where local bodies determine selection and central party performs a limited validation role. For District Council, Assembly and Westminster contests the first stage of selection is a convention attended by full party members within the relevant constituency. This convention is overseen by an independent chairperson appointed by the Elections and Organisation Committee (E&O), a body charged with

several campaigning duties. No further vetting of candidates takes place. Instructions for the hustings are determined by the E&O Committee and the candidate(s) will be elected by secret ballot using STV. Notably, provision is made for the Party Leader to add candidates to the official party ticket in any election. Central party involvement also extends to the ratification of proposed candidates by the party's Executive Committee, upon consultation with the E&O Committee. Besides these provisions, however, selection is primarily a decision taken locally.

The SDLP's gender equality measures concerning candidate selection are minimal. The sole provision for gender equality concerns selection at a district council level only, where the party constitution stipulates: 'Each District Executive must take all practical steps to ensure a gender balance if there are two or more candidates' (SDLP, 2009: Clause 18.8). Considering the localised nature of selection in the SDLP, a passive stance on ensuring gender equality is perhaps unsurprising. Those interviewed were keen to stress the democratised nature of selection in the party, with several expressing concern at greater central involvement in the process, prioritising local judgement above the promotion or pursuit of gender equality. When asked how local party branches might react to a greater centralisation of selection, respondents intimated the potential for internal conflict: '[the SDLP] is a very democratic party. They [branches and local members] would be far from happy' (female SDLP MLA, interview, 30 June 2009). One female SDLP councillor did, however, call for a greater engagement by central party in the process: 'I think it is [about] moving towards a bit more control at the centre. If you leave it [candidate selection] sometimes to local fiefdoms it can go belly-up' (interview, 16 April 2009). Protective branches unwilling to relinquish control over selection certainly fits the popular image—albeit one largely propagated by the media—of the SDLP as an ostensibly localised party.

7. Ulster Unionist Party

Another party with a notably decentralised structure is the UUP. The 'lack of central domination of party business' (Tonge and Evans, 2002, p. 61) within the oldest unionist party has been a well-documented feature (Tonge and Evans, 2002; Walker, 2004) and, along with the clear ideological factions that exist within its ranks, the autonomy enjoyed by its 18 local constituency associations has resulted in the party presenting a particularly fractured and ill-disciplined front, even in more recent times (Matthews, 2012). Perhaps unsurprisingly, for much of the party's history, candidate selection was a highly localised process. However, in 2007—in reaction to a particularly disappointing performance in the 2007 Assembly elections (UUP MLA, interview, 11 June 2009)—the party introduced several constitutional amendments, including one

which wrought substantial reform to its candidate selection methods. To consider selection within the UUP, therefore, necessitates reflection on two distinct processes.

Prior to 2007 selection in the UUP was conducted almost totally by the local constituency associations. According to those interviewed, central office exercised little control over the process, with local associations representing 'semi-autonomous bodies who picked whomever they wanted' (UUP party officer, interview, 18 June 2009); 'independent little fiefdoms which essentially were controlled by a small group of men' (UUP representative, interview, 27 July 2009). Crucially, on the topic of gender discrimination, respondents reflected that the extremely localised nature of selection allowed for an 'old boy's network' or 'Buggin's turn' culture to structure selection and disadvantage women who sought selection (UUP party officer, interview, 18 June 2009). Several of those interviewed alluded to the predominance of 'the right handshake' (female UUP councillor, interview, 17 July 2009) within the party, a handshake of common identity between UUP men: 'For a very, very long time selection was done by men in an Orange Hall or in their Church Hall, and it was done by handshakes and any [Ulster] Unionist who tells you otherwise is essentially lying through their teeth' (female DUP councillor, interview, 2 July 2009). An assessment of the UUP's pre-2007 methods of selection, therefore, suggests that women who sought selection had to overcome some substantial obstacles. As one UUP party officer surmised, 'basically in truth a woman had very little chance of electoral success in the Ulster Unionist Party' (interview, 18 June 2009).

The programme of reform in 2007 triggered, however, in the words of one respondent, a 'remarkable turnaround' in how the UUP conducted selection for District Council, Assembly and Westminster contests. The first stage of selection now consists of an applicant seeking admission to a Central Candidates List (CCL) through undergoing a series of training and 'competency' exercises set by central party officers. Officers then decide if candidates are eligible to seek selection for part-time (local government) or full-time (Westminster and/or Assembly) office. All sitting councillors, MLAs, MPs and MEPs are automatically included on the CCL. At a constituency-level a formal hustings attended by full UUP members is convened and a vote cast by secret ballot. In a change to procedures prior to 2007, local associations are required to elect two candidates instead of one for each available candidacy. A newly formed bespoke Election Committee, consisting of four officers from central party and three from the relevant local association, elect a final candidate by simple majority vote; a decision then ratified by the UUP Executive Committee.

Such reform has, therefore, resulted in a substantial centralisation of the UUP's selection process, with the final vote cast by an exclusive selectorate with an in-built central party majority. One male UUP MLA explained: 'It is

clear [that] the authority lies with the final selection committee. There is no doubt about that' (interview, 11 June 2009). In terms of ensuring a more representative UUP candidate slate in future election contests this appears a positive development. With the realignment of power from the local periphery to the centre comes the opportunity, according to several of those interviewed, to avoid past mistakes and ensure a greater diversity of candidates. One UUP MLA explained:

[The new procedures] will allow for more of an overview. Have we got an appropriate gender balance? ... So when it comes to the final selection in every constituency we have more of an overview rather than simply allowing each individual constituency to democratically select the candidates independently and then potentially have the result that we had last time [2007 Assembly elections], where we didn't have a gender balance and we had a very poor mix. (interview, 11 June 2009)

Besides the potential impact on gender diversity, the changes wrought by the UUP are also intriguing in light of a contemporary trend in the internal organisation of political parties. In the last two decades a clear process of 'enhanced democratisation' (Mair, 1994, p. 15) has occurred within parties in Western democracies, whereby they are engaging in organisational innovation which grants their membership greater say in the selection of both its electoral candidates and party leadership (Kenig, 2009a, p. 434; Kenig, 2009b, p. 241; Cross and Blais, 2012). By recentralising candidate selection the UUP, therefore, represents a rare case of a political party 'undemocratising' its selection methods. However, as previous studies show, in order to placate the disgruntled party masses, the reassertion of central control over candidate selection is often offset by the accompanying democratisation of another decision-making process. In the case of the UUP, the 2007 reform programme also saw the introduction of 'One Member One Vote' for its leadership selection contests. Even with this sweetening of the pill, however, establishing central control over a process long devolved to the local level can be a politically difficult task, and the question remains how the UUP's historically strong local associations feel about such reform. One female UUP councillor did, however, offer some insight into the potential grumbling at the grassroots:

I think it is wrong. The association members [will] have no say in the party. All we would be is fundraisers and the money that they pay into the party to be a member is of absolutely no meaning. So it is being completely taken away, the selection process from party members. They [central office] can foist somebody upon us and I just don't

think that is democratic. You are undermining the people, the association members. (interview, 8 July 2009)

8. Alliance Party of Northern Ireland

The Alliance Party also implements a multi-stage selection process which despite certain elements of central control is primarily localised in nature. In a change from the other Northern Irish parties (with the exception of the UUP post-2007), candidate ratification occurs at the outset of the selection process, with a central Candidate Approval Committee verifying and interviewing prospective candidates. For the purpose of this study, this vetting process appears wholly concerned with issues of competency rather than facilitating or impeding candidates from particular societal groups. Once on the party's central list of approved candidates, eligible candidates for Westminster, Assembly or District Council elections attend a selection meeting, led by an independent, centrally appointed Chair and attended by all Alliance members resident within the relevant constituency. Those eligible to vote must satisfy minimum membership tenure of at least six weeks prior to the date of the notice of the meeting (Alliance, 2009). Candidates are preferentially elected by secret ballot for each vacancy, with no further ratification from any other party body required. On a further note, the party does not possess any specific selection guidelines on gender. The Alliance Party's selection process is, therefore, typical of Northern Ireland's parties in general (with the exception of the UUP post-2007), in that, despite some central involvement, it is primarily a decision taken by local constituency associations and the grassroots party membership. One party officer underscores that: 'once somebody is selected by their local association they are there' (interview, 16 April 2009).

9. Localised decision-making and women's representation

It is clear from the processes outlined above that candidate selection in Northern Ireland is—with the exception of the UUP post-2007 and to a lesser extent Sinn Féin—a highly localised and inclusive affair, where party members at the constituency level represent the key selectorate. In many ways, such decentralised selection could be serving to disadvantage women in Northern Ireland's main parties and maintain existing gender representation patterns. Several studies have stressed the negative relationship between highly inclusive, decentralised selection procedures and the representation of women (as well as other underrepresented social groups) on candidate slates. In a recent cross-national comparative study, Kittelson (2006) finds that higher women's representation positively correlates with centralised selection. Hazan and Rahat (2010, p. 114) also stress that


'smaller, exclusive selectorates are more capable of balancing representation', while Rahat (2007, p. 166) highlights in a separate study, 'the tendency between the fullest participation and the most comprehensive representation, since maximising the former may impinge upon the latter'. Parties with inclusive selectorates, as confirmed by those within the UUP, simply find it difficult to implement and coordinate effective strategies aimed at producing a final group of socially representative candidates. In such instances, party selectorates prioritise territorial local representation over all other types of representation, a choice clearly illustrated in the case of parties in the neighbouring jurisdiction of the Republic of Ireland (Gallagher, 2003; Marsh, 2005). Unless tempered or offset by corrective mechanisms aimed at ensuring gender equality, such as candidate quotas, then inclusive selectorates more often than not produce unrepresentative candidate slates. Notably, none of Northern Ireland's main political parties implement any formal gender quota for their electoral candidates, the choice of their inclusive selectorates going largely unchecked.

Inclusive and localised selection methods, where territorial local representation trumps gender representation, also inevitably entails the setting of the informal candidacy requirement of a track record in the party organisation and the local constituency. This criteria has been identified in cross-national studies elsewhere (Norris and Lovenduski, 1993, p. 377; Norris, 1997, p. 3; Pedersen *et al*, 2007) and is addressed in the work highlighting the prominence of 'the local' in both British (Childs and Cowley, 2011) and Irish political parties (Gallagher, 1980; Weeks, 2008; Hazan and Rahat, 2010, p. 118). Evidence of party selectorates' predilection for 'local candidates' was also found in the case of Northern Ireland's parties. One SDLP MLA stated, 'it is important [for candidates] to be of the area' (interview, 8 April 2009); another UUP officer explained how prospective candidates were expected to 'go on the rubber chicken circuit' in the local association (interview, 18 June 2009); while one DUP councillor stressed that: 'a lot of it comes down to local issues. Do they [the selectorate] know you and are you going to put the work in on the ground' (interview, 2 July 2009). Crucially, for women the cultivation of an adequate local support base through long-time political activity is especially difficult, as they do not possess the resources—in terms of both time and money—to compete against better positioned male candidates. For that reason, the highly localised and inclusive nature of selection in Northern Ireland could be seen to discriminate against women.

Stressing this point further, with the exception of the UUP post-2007 the main parties also use proportional voting systems for selection which tend, by definition, to be highly personalised (Hazan and Rahat, 2010, p. 311). Respondents across all parties identified the prominence of the 'personal' or 'popular' vote, with candidates investing a large amount of time and effort into securing

Under representation and lack of diversity in Public Appointments in NI

Sport NI	Commissioner for Older People	Labour Relations Agency	
NI Transport Holding Company	General Teaching Council	Statistics Advisory Committee	
Certification Officer	NI Tourist Board	Historic Monuments Council	Policing Board
NI Law Commission	NI Fire and Rescue Service Board	Patient and Client Council	
Drainage Council	Commissioner for Children and Young People	Charity Advisory Committee	



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'Guardian of the Public Appointment Process'

**UNDER-REPRESENTATION and LACK OF DIVERSITY in
PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS in NORTHERN IRELAND**

January 2014

Housing Executive	Public Health Agency	Historic Buildings Council	Invest NI
NI Water	Livestock and Meat Commission	NI Screen	
Police Ombudsman	NI Museums Council	NI Council for Integrated Education	

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Foreword

I was asked, in December, to give evidence to the Northern Ireland Assembly All Party Working Group hearings on the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 [UNSCR 1325], on the topic of women in decision-making in Northern Ireland since 1998 [the year of the Good Friday Agreement], with specific reference to public appointments. My input began with the fact that in 1998, 35% of the membership of public boards here were women and in 2011/12 the figure was 33%.



The statistics, on women and other under-represented groupings, are not improving. People under 30 years of age, people with a disability and people from the ethnic minority communities are rarely appointed to boards. Year after year, each of these categories makes up only one or two per cent of public board membership.

As the years progress [15 years to date since the Good Friday Agreement and the Northern Ireland Act 1998] it is more and more difficult to expect the public to believe that UNSCR 1325, and Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act which 'provides a statutory framework for underpinning mainstreaming of equality of opportunity', are being taken seriously by the policy-makers in the field of public appointments.

In addition, individuals and organisations in the business and third sectors have been vociferous in telling me that many of their people will not apply for public appointments because 'they are clearly not for them'; they are largely 'for men with a public sector background'. Whether or not this is an accurate analysis, it is certainly a widespread belief and is damaging to the image of the boards of public bodies, despite the good work they do.

Our public bodies play a major role in the lives of all of us. They deliver vital services and are accountable for the expenditure of vast sums of public money. The fact that 89% of the government estate is owned by its 'arms-length' bodies is a quick measure of their importance. It is also an indication of why good governance of their boards is vital. The people who express frustration to me about lack of opportunity to become involved, to serve, are people who wish to bring their energies and abilities to the board tables and to be part of the process of 'participative democracy' that we so often hear about in rhetorical terms. We can move from that rhetoric to reality only if we apply ourselves properly to the task.

My view is that, whilst there are many good public appointments made, and the vast majority of the 1400-plus board members [who are appointed fairly and on merit] carry out their work effectively and with commitment, our public boards are missing out on skills, knowledge and perspectives that exist throughout the community. This is not conducive to optimal performance by our boards, is potentially unfair to many people who wish to serve and feel excluded, and helps to generate a largely undeserved bad reputation for public appointments.

That view is increasingly shared in communities and government systems around the world. There is a growing body of research and programmes of action in many countries. We must not be left behind in this work. We can learn from the published examples and we can generate and disseminate our own examples of best practice.

But first, we must give the proper degree of priority to the matter. There is political and administrative support for change, but that alone is not enough. We must now convert good intention into focussed effort.

As things stand, the required improvements will not happen. Some individual Departments are developing measures to effect improvement but, without an overall policy commitment, coupled with plans of action that are publically articulated, monitored and reported on regularly, this work is destined to remain fragmented and uncoordinated.

The need now is for the lack of diversity on boards to be tackled through clear policy directives, across Government rather than Department by Department, and for strong, targeted and persistent programmes of action to be developed and implemented.

I have produced this report with the intention of raising the profile of the diversity issue to the level where it belongs, and of stimulating the development of policy and action by Government.

I, and my team at CPA NI, can raise the issues and can facilitate discussion and research, but we cannot make the changes. That is for the policy-makers and the Departments to do. I look forward to playing my part in that process.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Keanie', with a stylized, cursive script.

John Keanie

Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland.

Introduction

1. This report follows on from the 'Interim Report on Diversity and Under- Representation in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland'. The Interim report, produced by the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland [the Commissioner] was developed primarily for the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service [HOCS] and the Permanent Secretaries Group [PSG] to ensure that the Commissioner's analysis and definition of the problem was shared by that senior team and the direction being proposed for tackling the problem was acceptable. The Interim Report was endorsed by HOCS and PSG in February 2013. Since then work has been under way, under the auspices of John Keanie the Commissioner, and his office [CPA NI] together with the Diversity Working Group [DWG – details below] to develop actions by which the Departments can improve the diversity of the public bodies for which they are responsible.
2. This report is being produced to make the Executive, the Departments and others aware of the 'Recommendations for Action' that have been developed [see Appendix] in the expectation that the Executive and the Departments will begin to implement the recommendations. It is unlikely that all of the recommendations will be seen by all of the Departments as being appropriate to, or workable by, them, but it is hoped that a sufficient range of the recommendations [many of which have come from the Departmental officials on the DWG] will be implemented and will begin to make a difference to the diversity statistics.
3. The Commissioner and his office, whilst recognising that it is for Government and its Departments to make the changes, are fully committed to providing support throughout that process in whatever way they can. With that in mind, they look forward to working cooperatively in the efforts that must follow this report.

The Diversity Working Group and the Approach to the Problem

4. The current Commissioner, in looking at previous attempts to tackle the diversity issue [which, unfortunately, have had little or no positive effect on the diversity statistics] noted two points in particular.
 - a. A Diversity Working Group set up some years ago consisted mostly of people from outside the Departments. The process was, therefore, outsiders telling the Departments what they 'were doing wrong' and telling them how they might improve.
 - b. The efforts in previous diversity initiatives focussed almost exclusively on 'outreach', i.e. on engaging with more groups and individuals to encourage them to apply for public appointments. Scant attention was paid to the actual processes used by Departments to recruit and select public appointees. This meant that, even though more people might be encouraged to apply for board positions, the processes used to select them have been left unchanged and the same type of candidates as of old have [or at least in the public perception appear to have] an unfair advantage in competitions for board places. In either case [real or perceived disadvantage] the effect is negative, putting people off and creating scepticism about public appointments.
5. In developing the current diversity initiative, the Commissioner has attempted to rectify the faults in previous initiatives, firstly by putting together and Chairing a DWG including 'public appointment and equality practitioners' from Departments, who are engaged in public appointment competitions regularly as part of their job, and by ensuring that there is a better balance between looking at outreach matters and looking at Departmental processes.

6. The Commissioner wishes to thank those involved in the DWG for their time, their effort and their ideas:

Paul Donaldson	- Independent Assessor
Christopher Farrington	- Department for Employment and Learning
Michael Ferguson	- Department of Education [formerly Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister]
Sharon Fitchie	- Department of Agriculture and Rural Development
Paul Gamble	- Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure
Paul Grocott	- Department for Regional Development
Lynne McElhinney	- Department for Regional Development
Kieran McGrattan	- Department for Culture, Arts and Leisure
Lynne Miskelly	- Department for Employment and Learning
Pat Neeson	- Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland
Gillian Shaw CBE	- Independent Assessor
Catherine Synnott	- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
Rachel Ward	- Department for Employment and Learning

7. Thanks are also due to organisations and individuals outside Government, for ideas, challenge and encouragement. These included:

- 'Women in Leadership' Programme
- 'Women and Peacebuilding' Project
- The Northern Ireland Youth Forum
- Disability Action
- The Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities
- The Institute of Directors, Northern Ireland
- The Chairs' Forum
- CO3 [senior 'Third Sector' representatives]
- Recruitment Advisor of the Strategic Investment Board
- The panel of public appointment Independent Assessors

8. It is worth noting that these very different groups and individuals delivered a remarkably similar message. It was that the public appointments process requires urgent change. If Ministers and their Departments are really committed to fair representation in public appointments, then action is needed to overhaul the existing processes to make them more welcoming, flexible and effective.

Under-representation and lack of diversity - the facts

9. Statistics produced by the Office of the First and deputy First Ministers [OFMDFM], in the 'Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report' [i]- [See 'References', at end of report, for this and other publications quoted.] , show that membership of the boards of many public bodies in Northern Ireland does not reflect the make-up of the population they serve.

10. Women, young people, people with a disability and members of the minority ethnic communities are among those who are under-represented. The last figures available (published 2011/12) from OFMDFM, give the percentages serving on boards as:

Women	33%
Young people [under the age of 30]	1%
People with a declared disability	2%
Ethnic Minorities	1%
11. There is also much anecdotal evidence, from business organisations and individuals, and from third sector organisations and individuals, that people from these backgrounds, particularly younger people with modern skills and perspectives, and people who have gained a deep knowledge of social and economic challenges from their work in communities, are underrepresented and are reluctant to submit themselves to a recruitment process that they see as 'not for them'.
12. Some people have asked, as this diversity initiative has progressed, 'Does it matter?', 'As long as we get 'safe pairs of hands' on to our public boards, why should we worry that they are not representative of the community they serve?'
13. The fact is that we, in Northern Ireland, are not alone in asking those questions or facing the challenge of changing the composition of our public boards. There is, literally, a world of examples of Governments, organisations, academics and 'ordinary citizens' asking the same questions and facing the same challenges; and the answers to the questions are invariably the same:

'It does matter', 'safe pairs of hands are not all that is required'. Boards with equal numbers of women and men are regularly shown to outperform male dominated boards; boards with people with disabilities, boards with younger members, boards with people from the ethnic minority communities and boards with the full range of skills and perspectives that are found across the public, private and third sector, are shown to better represent and serve the whole community.
14. There is a large and growing body of research and many action plans for change, emanating from central Governments and local authorities in, for example, the UK, Canada, the USA and Australia.
15. There is also much research on private sector boards to demonstrate that diversity on boards is productive. This research is worth noting as it usefully quantifies some of the effects of diversity on boards. For example, the Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance and Financial Regulation, in a paper dealing with 'Gender Diversity on Boards' [ii] says, regarding the 'Effect of Women Directors', '.. the results of a 2012 study of nearly 2400 companies showed that from December 2005 to December 2011, large-cap[ital] companies with women directors outperformed peers with no women directors by 26% and small to mid-cap[ital] companies with women on the board outperformed their peers with all male boards by 17%'.
16. This study also referred to women 'professionalising' and 'improving the atmosphere' of boards, paving the way for women increasingly to influence corporate decision making.
17. It seems reasonable to assume that many of the principles, dynamics and drivers that lead to enhanced performance and effectiveness in the private sector are applicable to many public sector boards and that the impact of increasing the numbers of women and under-represented groupings is likely to be just as beneficial.

18. It is not intended that this report will be an in-depth analysis of the research; however it is plain to see, from the analyses and plans examined, that many similarities exist, with regard to board diversity, between Northern Ireland and other localities. There are therefore valuable lessons to be learned from the literature that is readily available. It is strongly recommended to Departments and others that they avail of this rich source of help.
19. One recent media article said that whilst there is cause to celebrate diversity in society, the UK 'will not be able to celebrate diversity on the boards running public services', with, for example, only 5.5% of total board appointments last year being from ethnic minority backgrounds, compared to 7% in 2010, and 14% of the population being ethnic minority citizens. It goes on to quote the figure on NHS bodies as being 4.6% and continues 'This is clearly not representative of the contribution and expertise of ethnic minorities in our health service and should be a wake-up call that something is wrong with the recruitment process'. Compare the Northern Ireland statistics with this and it is clear that NI too has much work to do.
20. An example of relevant research, published in October 2009 by the Government Equalities Office, which commissioned the Cranfield School of Management to 'examine the issue of diversity on boards of directors in the private and public sectors' [iii], asked two main questions:
 - a. 'Why are so few women and other under-represented groups on public and private sector boards?' and
 - b. 'What is being done in order to increase diversity on boards?'The report developed three broad categories of explanation:
 - a. At 'Individual level: no evidence was found that under-represented groups lack the skills or qualifications to be on boards. A perceived lack of opportunity for under-represented groups at board level may cause those individuals to lower their career expectations.'
 - b. At 'Interpersonal level: diverse candidates lack social capital and are often excluded from influential social networks, affecting access to boards. In addition boardroom cultures can be inhospitable to individuals from under-represented groups.'
 - c. Concerning the 'Appointment process: it is suggested that the problem is not related to the lack of available candidates, but to the process by which directors are appointed on boards. These processes allow the current power elite [dominated by white males] always to hire in their own image, thus failing to tap into a more diverse pool of talent.' This section identifies six 'obstacles that put women and other under-represented groups at a disadvantage':
 - a lack of awareness of available directorships
 - language and the framing of directorships
 - weak links between search consultants and minorities
 - lack of diversity on current boards and nomination committees
 - unclear selection criteria
 - Unconscious bias in the selection process.'
21. There are many resonances in the Cranfield report with our situation in NI and whilst it is short on proposals for action it provides a useful starting point for the questions which any Department could begin with, in looking at how it makes its public appointments.

Frameworks for action

22. Whilst the Cranfield report did not provide proposals for action, there is no dearth of action plans in the international literature. The 'Diverse City' initiative of 'The Greater Toronto Leadership Project' [iv], which is well worth the attention of Government and its Departments here, has produced 'A toolkit for non-profit boards' and 'Ten tips to diversity on non-profit boards', which are:

- [1] Make a public commitment to diversity
- [2] Take a diversity audit of your board
- [3] Focus on the skills the board needs to meet its strategic priorities
- [4] Set explicit goals in the selection process and develop a strategy
- [5] Recognise a variety of experiences and expertise
- [6] Aim to create a critical mass
- [7] Encourage diverse board members to take on additional responsibilities
- [8] Train all board members on diversity issues
- [9] Mainstream diversity in the organisation's activities
- [10] Measure results of diversity by its impact

This approach is closely echoed in a report entitled 'Diversity Matters – Changing the face of public boards' [v], by the Maytree Foundation for the Canadian Government, in its 'Action Plan to Achieve Board Diversity':

- [1] Make board diversity your public policy
- [2] Collect information to make decisions
- [3] Set measurable goals
- [4] Recruit for diversity
- [5] Accommodate diversity on your board
- [6] Report on progress

23. Closer to home, in June 2013 the Cabinet office in the UK hosted a highlevel networking event for senior women, published statistics on gender diversity in public appointments [37% of new public appointments made by Whitehall Departments in 2012/13 were women] and declared its support of efforts to raise the proportion of women on public Boards to 50% by 2015 [vi]. A quote from that paper highlights the central reason for diversity, in this case applied to women but of real importance to other under-represented groupings: '...women must be at the heart of our efforts to create employment and grow our economy. This must extend to roles in public life. It's not about political correctness – it's about good business sense.' The Cabinet Office has gone on to produce a short paper entitled 'Increasing Diversity in Public Appointments' [vii] dealing with matters such as raising awareness and monitoring progress.

24. So, it is clear that the problems of under-representation and lack of diversity on public boards are ubiquitous in Government systems and international in scope. It is also clear that many Governments have recognised and admitted this and are doing something about it. As illustrated above, there is a growing number of published examples which readers of this report should find useful. One further striking example is the paper entitled 'Increasing Gender Diversity on Boards: Current Index of Formal Approaches', from the Catalyst research organisation [Catalyst.org], which sets out the current and pending actions in a wide range

of countries, for achieving greater diversity on legislative, regulatory and voluntary boards [viii]. That paper begins as follows: 'Around the globe and across all avenues for change – from legislated quotas to an explosion of advocacy groups championing voluntary measures – efforts calling for actions to increase board diversity are approaching a tipping point. The demand for greater gender equality in the boardroom is higher than ever before, and most directors recognise the value of board diversity.'

25. In this context, it should be seen as imperative that, in Northern Ireland, we step up our efforts which have been relatively fragmented to date and mostly ineffective.

The CPA NI Diversity Initiative so far and what is now needed

26. So far, this diversity initiative has been developed at a fairly slow pace, mainly due to the necessity of ensuring that 'everyone is on board'; that all the main participants in the public appointments process accept the need for change and are committed to working towards that change.

- It is clear that the Civil Service, at the most senior levels, has supported the initiative.
- It is evident that many politicians are keen to see the sort of changes that will open up public appointments to more of their constituents who wish to serve on public boards but have not felt encouraged or able to apply for positions in the past.
- It is also evident that several Departments are working, individually, on the problem by, for example, setting targets or considering 'piloting' small changes in their processes.

27. It is important that the diversity initiative is now:

- Formally adopted at the highest levels, by the political and administrative leaders in Government given more priority,
- tackled on a Government-wide basis rather than relying on individual Departments making efforts in relative isolation, and
- stepped up in its pace and profile.

To summarise:

- We have the statistics that show we have problems of underrepresentation and lack of diversity on many of our public boards.
- We have a growing body of researched evidence showing that 'diversity is good'.
- We have the knowledge that the Governments of many other countries are tackling these problems and we have examples of their approach to the work.
- We have heard, from many organisations and individuals, that there is a demand for change and we know that people wish to serve but believe that the system is 'not for them'.
- We know that there is also a desire, within the political and administrative systems of Government in Northern Ireland, for change.
- We know the task is a difficult one and will not be accomplished quickly, but we now have some of the building blocks which Government and its Departments can use to begin making the changes that must be made: e.g.
 - The Canadian 'Diverse City' and 'Diversity Matters' high-level action plans, briefly summarised above, and several other published international examples of plans to help inform development of an overall plan that can be disseminated to all Departments and made public.
 - The recent establishment here of an inter-departmental 'Public Appointments Forum', set up to enable sharing of best practice in public appointment practices across the

Northern Ireland Departments, which could serve as a vehicle for such planning and dissemination.

- The ideas for change generated by the Diversity Working Group and outside organisations, summarised in the Appendix to this report.

Next steps

28. [1] CPA NI has generated this diversity initiative and provided leadership to date; it is now for Government to act. CPA NI will continue to provide support as the initiative continues, including involvement in pilot projects with Departments, some of which are already under consideration.
- [2] The Commissioner has presented this report to the PSG. He has recommended that:
- the ‘frameworks for action’, and the ‘recommendations for action’ in this report should be used as the basis for developing an overall Government plan for achieving greater diversity in public appointments and for developing actions in each Department appropriate to each Department’s requirements and capabilities.
 - Work should begin on recommendations [1] and [2] as soon as possible, to set the strategic direction of a new Government initiative on ‘Diversity in Public Appointments’ and to make a clear public commitment to implement the necessary changes in the public appointment process.
- [3] In response, the PSG has agreed that the report will be submitted to the Public Appointments Forum to work towards production of a submission to the Northern Ireland Executive.

Appendix

Recommendations for action

The Diversity Working Group, which finished its series of meetings in January 2014, produced a range of ideas that Government overall, and the individual Departments, should consider for increasing diversity in public appointments. Also, some of the groups and organisations that were consulted made suggestions for change, and a few of the recommendations are based on the reviewed literature.

The recommendations are listed below for consideration. There is no claim that they are exclusive and it is expected that, as the work is developed, other ideas for action will emerge. The recommendations range in nature from high-level, policy / strategic to detailed process recommendations. It is the strong belief of CPA NI that the effectiveness of the recommended actions will be greatly enhanced if they are set in the context of an overall government plan for diversity, publicly articulated. The Canadian ‘Diversity Matters’ initiative is strong on this point; it says ‘Our plan recognises that the responsibility for achieving diversity is a shared one between Governments and their [public bodies]’.

It is essential that, when making changes to public appointment processes, Departments must at all times continue to observe the Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland and the Anti-Discrimination Laws. The Code can be found on the CPA NI website. www.publicappointmentsni.org

It contains information on how to source the Anti-Discrimination laws. CPA NI is available at all times to assist with matters relating to the Code.

The recommendations, below, are loosely grouped in categories such as ‘Strategic recommendations’ and ‘Awareness-raising’:

Strategic recommendations

- [1] Make board diversity public policy and set measurable goals: - Specific public policy should be developed on board diversity, together with an overall framework for action by the Executive and Departments, and this should be articulated to the public, monitored and reported on annually.
- [2] It should be made clear to Departments and the public that the intention is to change the culture of the public appointment process with the aim of improving diversity and eradicating under-representation on public boards. Also, the culture and practices of individual boards should be examined to ensure that they are conducive to women and other under-represented groupings serving on them.
- [3] The recently created inter-departmental 'Public Appointments Forum' [the Forum] provides capacity for issues of under-representation and lack of diversity to be addressed across the N.I. Civil Service rather than on a departmental basis. The Forum should be tasked with ensuring that the new policy and framework at [1] above is articulated and disseminated across all Departments and it should be sufficiently resourced to carry out its work. It is also recommended that 'Diversity' should feature as a standing item on the agendas of the Forum.
- [4] It is considered that the Forum might benefit from the inclusion of a challenge function, provided by an external member or members. This should be examined.
- [5] It is believed that the establishment of diversity targets, set at overall and departmental levels, will lend focus and rigour to the diversity initiative. Work should begin on establishing such targets.
- [6] Departments should conduct a statistical analysis of applications after each recruitment competition, to discern progress towards greater diversity. The departmental analysis should then be pooled for an overall picture. These analyses should inform the on-going development of policy and practice.

Awareness-raising recommendations

- [7] Mechanisms for raising awareness of public appointments are fragmented. Consideration should be given to a more centralised approach, perhaps using the NI Direct website. Vacancies should also be publicised through the public libraries network, which has proved successful in recent competitions. The nature of public appointment advertisements should be reviewed as they are seen by many to be unattractive to people outside the 'usual circle' of applicants. The imaginative use of technology should be more fully explored in the task of raising awareness.
- [8] The use of case studies should be developed, portraying successes by individuals from under-represented groups who have gained places on public boards.
- [9] All information on public appointments, e.g. 'Make your Mark: A Guide to Public Appointments in Northern Ireland', should be revised, in conjunction with CPA NI, to reflect the new policy and framework at [1] above, and should portray a proactive and focussed approach by Government to addressing under-representation and lack of diversity, whilst honouring and protecting the principle of selection on merit.
- [10] A pilot project to raise awareness amongst potential applicants/interested parties is currently being considered by CPA NI and a Department. The results of this pilot should be disseminated across the Departments.

Recruitment-process recommendations

- [11] Departments should include, in the 'Appointment Plan' which they produce for every public appointment competition, a section on diversity which sets out, for the Minister's

approval, what steps [in outreach and process] will be taken to achieve the best possible spread of applicants and, ultimately, appointees. CPA NI will include this requirement in the Commissioner's Code of Practice.

- [12] The public appointment process has a tendency to be 'generic' in nature, i.e. focussed on making a 'public appointment' as opposed to appointing an individual to the board of a specific organisation, with its specific requirements of board members. Many examples have been cited, by panel members, of experienced candidates using 'stock answers' which they have developed to answer the commonly used questions in most public appointment competitions. Departments should focus the recruitment process more on the requirements of the particular organisation and its board.
- [13] Departments should examine the opportunity to reduce the number of statutory nominations to the boards of their arms-length bodies, opening up positions for a wider range of applicants.
- [14] Departments could consider interviewing a larger number of applicants where is appropriate to do so.
- [15] Departments, in populating boards, should be 'building teams' rather than 'filling slots'. This will lead to such measures as:
 - conducting an audit of board skills and planning to recruit against identified needs, including the types of community-based skills and perspectives that are not well reflected in the standard set of competencies typically used in current public appointment processes.
 - if necessary creating different categories of board member, with specific application form questions and interview questions.
 - looking critically at job descriptions and person specifications to reflect this approach and widen the range of potential applicants.
 - looking critically at the criteria and not sticking to the 'tried and tested' criteria used frequently across public appointments.
 - changing the written / verbal balance of the process where appropriate, e.g. it might be better, on the 'communication' criterion, to require the candidate to demonstrate his/her abilities throughout the interview or by means of a presentation rather than providing a written 'stock answer' on the application form.
 - avoiding the clichéd questions; developing questions that draw out a proper demonstration of competency.
 - reducing the number of selection criteria where appropriate, or asking applicants to fulfil some, not all, of the criteria, on the basis that the board does not need one homogeneous group of board members who replicate each other's skills and abilities.
 - reviewing the use of 'knowledge' criteria, in which there are many examples of candidates 'cutting and pasting' website answers; instead make these criteria such that candidates have to give short presentations at interview.

Analysis recommendations

- [16] 'Multiple appointments' [when one individual is appointed to two or more boards] have been cited by consultees as reducing opportunities for others to secure public appointments. The statistics on multiple appointments should be examined and policy developed that will guide Departments and their appointment panels on how to handle the issue. Some restriction on multiple appointments would be seen, by many, as evidence of the culture change that is sought in public appointments.

- [17] Succession planning for board membership has been patchy in many Departments and arms-length bodies and should be improved. Recent CPA NI audits have highlighted this requirement. This work by Departments should include consideration of diversity and how succession planning can incorporate diversity planning.
- [18] Remuneration of board members does not exhibit consistency, with some board members being unremunerated. This is believed by many to be a disincentive to potential applicants. An audit should be conducted across the Departments to determine the full facts, and guidelines produced to assist Departments in dealing consistently and fairly with the matter.

Outreach recommendations

- [19] Departments should specifically encourage applications from 'nontraditional backgrounds'; they should include this in the application form and should target interest groups and sectoral groups.
- [20] Departments should consider use of the 'Guaranteed Interview' scheme which has had some success in bringing forward for interview candidates with a disability who demonstrate in the application form that they have the basic competencies for the board position. Also, with regard to applicants in receipt of various disability benefits, guidelines should be developed to address the problem of potential applicants being dissuaded from applying for remunerated posts because of the potential disruption to their benefits.
- [21] Departments should consider using a variation of the welcoming statement commonly included in advertisements for public appointments, to ensure that it is clear they are seeking the widest range of applicants, including applicants from the private and third sectors.
- [22] The content, language and style of candidate information packs should be reviewed, with input by CPA NI, in line with the new policy and framework at [1] above.
- [23] More support should be provided for individuals who are considering applying for public appointments. Short seminars and / or papers could be prepared to help potential applicants understand what public appointments are, how they get to know what opportunities are being advertised, how to understand the competency-based selection process and what panels are looking for, how to deal with the application and interview process and how to portray their skills and abilities as added value to the board.
- [24] Very few younger people have been able to secure Board positions; senior officials and recruitment panels have often expressed reluctance to take the risk they see attached to placing relatively inexperienced people on boards, even when the skills and perspectives of a younger person might add value to the board of a particular organisation. A range of possibilities exist, for introducing younger people to 'board life', including 'Shadow boards', mentoring relationships for young board members, and internships. Departments should consider developing such schemes, perhaps initially on a pilot basis.

CPA NI action recommendations

- [25] The audits of CPA NI, which include examination of departmental efforts on diversity in each competition, should include examination of how the competition arrangements fulfil the requirements of the new policy and framework.
- [26] CPA NI should ensure that Independent Assessors are trained and enabled to challenge pre-conceived ideas as to what is required of potential appointees and encourage recognition, at appointment panel level, of the benefits of diversity.

References:

- [i] Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report.
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- [iii] Government Equalities Office - Cranfield School of Management study to 'Examine the issue of diversity on boards of directors in the private and public sectors.'
https://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/bitstream/1826/5268/1/299150_GEO_RSFCranfield_acc3.pdf
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- [vii] Cabinet Office - 'Increasing Diversity in Public Appointments'
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/increasing-diversity-in-public-appointments>
- [viii] Catalyst.org - 'Increasing gender diversity on boards: Current Index of Formal Approaches'.
<http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/increasing-gender-diversity-boards-current-index-formal-approaches>

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Iceland Outcome Report

Visit to the Icelandic Parliament by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee

Committee Report

Wednesday 24 September 2014

Ms Eygló Hardardóttir, Minister of Social Affairs and Housing

Background

1. Ms Eygló Hardardóttir, Minister of Social Affairs and Housing and has responsibility for:
 - Implementation of the gender equality legislation
 - The Centre for Gender Equality, responsible for the administration of gender equality
 - Appointing a Gender Equality Council and a Complaints Committee on Gender Equality
2. Within the Ministry of Social Affairs is a special department which in charge of Gender Equality and Employment Laws.

Key issues discussed:

- the role of the Women's List (a political party) in the election of the First women to the Iceland Parliament in 1922
- The importance of Party voluntary quotas which started late 1980s
- the role of parental leave – 3 months for mothers, 3 for fathers and a further 3 months to be taken by either mother or fathers
- the gender pay gap
- the role of Trade Unions in advancing gender equality
- gender budgeting – gender basis analysis in resource distribution
- the importance of a Women's Movement within each political parties e.g. training and resources dictated at gender equality
- women feminist clubs in secondary schools
- the 'Pledge to Work for Gender Equality' has now reached 100,000 for men in Iceland

Thursday 25 September 2014

Members of the Judicial Affairs and Education Committee

Background

3. In 2011 the responsibility for gender equality was transferred from the Welfare Committee to the Judicial Affairs and Education Committee.
4. One of the main purpose of the changes made in 2011 was to distance the parliament from the government and that the committees were independent from the Ministers. Therefore, how the Government decides to organise its Cabinet and matters has no influence on the committees.

Key Issues Identified

- The use by Political Parties of voluntary quotas – Parties vary on the methods used, but they all hold the same aims and vision in addressing gender equality in politics
- Role models for women and young girls very important, but equally important to have men actively supporting gender equality
- Education – women doing men's jobs but men not doing women's jobs
- No equal pay – but getting better
- New Parties with young people and emphasis on caring, teaching
- The need for women Ministers and Committee Chairperson
- A need to change the culture on gender equality
- Young Parliamentarians with children want to change times of meetings (one day a week (Thursday) the Parliament can meet up to midnight)
- The loss of women in politics around 8 years needs to be addressed
- The need for a 2 prong approach – rules/laws and good role models

The Centre for Gender Equality**Background**

5. The Centre for Gender Equality provides counselling and education in the field of gender. The Centre also helps, when needed, in preparing complaints for the Complaints Committee.

Key Issues Identified

- the importance of collecting information and monitoring the Act on Gender Equality in Iceland
- once information has been provided then organisations / Government can be called into question by the Centre – powers to call for information to fine
- the introduction of a 40% quota for female positions on corporate boards (Article 15)¹ which became effective from September 2013 onwards but does not apply to political parties
- enterprises and institutions with more than 25 employees, on average over the year have to set themselves a gender equality action programme (Article 18)²
- the Centre for Gender Equality gets reports submitted from the Local Government municipalities
- political parties are contacted by the Centre when it comes to elections emphasising the need for gender equality
- gender sensitive budgeting has proved very useful
- Article 15 of the Act requires Ministers and Ministries to appoint women and men to at least 40% of positions on Government and Local Government Boards on Committees e.g. 44% female in 2012.

Informal Working Lunch with Members from Political Parties, Althingi Restaurant

- Mr. Ossur Skarpheoinsson MP, Party Leader of the Social Democratic Alliance of Iceland
- Ms Lineik Anna Saevarsdoittir MP, Progressive Party (tbc)

1 Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008, as amended by Act No. 162/2010 and No. 126/2011.

2 Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008, as amended by Act No. 162/2010 and No. 126/2011.

- Ms Svandís Svavarsdóttir, MP and chairperson of the Left-Green parliamentary group

Key Issues Identified

- No childcare allowance but can get housing allowance for accommodation in Reykjavik if MP lives a certain distance from the Parliament
- Women role models all important
- Political Party voluntary quotas very important to embed gender equality
- Women leave politics because of 'status quo'
- Article 15 of Act is important in advancing gender equality

Icelandic Women's Rights Association (IWRA)

Background

6. The main focus of IWRA work today is equality between men and women as elected Members in the Parliament and the municipalities, as well as gender balance in leadership positions in both public and private companies.

Key Issues Identified

- the need for Political Party voluntary gender quotas – incremental approach
- gender budgeting
- gender culture (nurture vs nature)
- resources for the women's sector
- the impact and accountability of the first 4 year Action Programme
- women involved in Councils (Municipalities) are very important as it gives vital women experience
- women need 'a coalition' to support each other

RIKK – Institute for Gender, Equality and Difference, University of Iceland

7. The Institute promotes research in the field of gender studies and the dissemination of research results and information. In Iceland, RIKK works together with academics from the five Schools within the University, as well as with academics and specialists from other universities and institutions, employing an interdisciplinary approach in gender and equality research. RIKK also serves in advisory roles to Government and civil society bodies.

Key Issues Identified

- Gender budgeting
- Political parties need to keep women in the Party
- Women need to work a cross-party level
- Mentoring is not common in Iceland but would be useful
- Desegregation of data information is essential

Some Areas of Concern for Consideration

- Women complain about the workload and hours
- Ministers are not held accountable with regards to public appointments

- Most Municipalities do not comply with providing a report on gender equality to the Centre for Gender Equality
- It is recognised that young men are not participating in politics due to the lack of awareness by political parties of the role many of them play in family life
- Parties who do not support women to work collectively
- The need for money to participate in politics
- The media including social media in how it portrays and 'hate speak' against women
- Political parties can no longer say women are not interested in politics
- Strongly encourage all political parties to consider quotas
- Support for the women's sector to ensure the development of programmes for women to increase confidence and experience
- To get younger women involved through education
- To maintain women long term in policies
- The second 4 year gender action programme needs to be fully resourced and implemented
- In rural areas it is difficult to get women involved

Lessons Learned in Iceland

- Political Parties need to recognise that they are paramount to increase, support and sustain women in political life
- Having a clear gender action programme within the Government and gender action plans in Municipalities and business has its merits
- The desegregation of information and monitoring is essential
- Positive external factors can lead to an increase in women becoming involved in politics such as:
 - a. gender budgeting can ensure resources that would support the increase of women in decision making roles
 - b. childcare
 - c. maternity / paternity
- Legislation needs to be robust to change cultural attitudes
- Political Parties need to build relationship with the women's sector in order to attract women into politics
- Political Parties and Parliaments need to consider the workload and time required of the duties of a political representative
- Political Parties and Parliament should encourage a woman's network
- Women Politicians need to consider a coalition to share experiences
- Recognise the issues faced by women who live in rural areas
- Young people need to be encouraged to consider politics, tackle social media bully and to address gender stereotyping from early school age
- Ensure the women's sector can be sustained with relevant resources

Report on Visit to Wales

Visit to the National Assembly for Wales

Wednesday 4 – 5 June 2014

Background

1. On 8 April 2014 the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) agreed the new issue to be reviewed would be *Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly*.
2. In its proposed approach to this Review the Committee has agreed a number of methods in which to gather and disseminate the evidence on this issue and will include Assembly Research, expert witnesses, a call for evidence and exploration of other legislatures to the approach adopted in increasing women's participation in politics.
3. As identified in an Assembly Research paper in March 2014, the Committee was informed the National Assembly for Wales has 42% of its Assembly Members women. Furthermore Members were informed the Presiding Officer has been instigating a specific initiative to encourage more women into public life and a cross-party *Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus* has been established.
4. As part of its scoping stage on this Review, the Committee agreed to visit the National Assembly for Wales probably on Wednesday 4 June 2014 and returning Thursday 5 June. The programme for the visit focused on taking evidence from the following:
 - The Presiding Officer
 - Assembly Members of the Women's Caucus
 - The Equality and Human Rights Commission
 - Chwarae Teg; and
 - Dr. Paul Chaney
5. AERC Members who visited the National Assembly for Wales are Stephen Moutray MLA, Chairperson, Paula Bradley MLA and Caitríona Ruane MLA.

Initial Meeting with Presiding Officer

Present: Dame Rosemary Butler AM, Presiding Officer, Craig Stephenson, Chief Advisor to the Presiding Officer and Interim Director of Commission Services at National Assembly for Wales, Alice Randone Initiative Team Member.

6. The Presiding Officer and her team detailed each of the initiatives and below is a brief outline of each.
 - a) Regional Seminars
 - There were four regional seminars held across Wales – one in each region
 - Chairs of the seminars were selected from those groups and organisations not normally involved at that level in seminars such as Travellers, business, school and Women's Institute
 - Key findings formed the content for a national conference

- b) National Conference
- Held in November 2013 and based on the main barriers that emerged from the regional seminar
 - Focused on offering practical solutions to overcome them
7. Following the Conference The Presiding Officer agreed:
- to write to the Party Leaders (see appendix A) to ask to consider steps to ensure more women for the 2016 elections
 - to provide female role models
 - to create a centralised resource to contain information on public appointments
 - to create a mentoring scheme to develop and training women

Initiatives

- Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus
- Women in Public Life Lectures Series
- POWiPL Portal
- Women in Public Life Development Scheme

Introduction to Women Assembly Members

8. Two members of the Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus joined the meeting, Rebecca Evans AM for Mid and West Wales and Antoinette Sandbach AM for North Wales. Following correspondence with the Party Leaders the Presiding Officer asked them to nominate a representative to sit on the Assembly Women in Democracy Caucus.
9. The aims of the caucus are to seek and impart best practice, particularly from other parliaments around the world, to increase women's parliamentary representation and will report back recommendations by the end of 2014.
10. At present it is preparing for a visit to Iceland in September to explore the 50% representation of women at all levels (business, politics etc.)

Key Issues Discussed

11. **The Success of the National Assembly for Wales (50-50)**
- The National Assembly for Wales as a new institution was a 'blank canvas'
 - Twinning by Labour / Zipping by Plaid Cymru was extremely important
12. **Other Keys to Success are the importance of:**
- men in bringing forward women
 - Political Parties - not just in politics but in decision making roles within the Party
 - Mentoring
 - A women's caucus
 - Helping women take the next step
13. **Positive reasons for more women**
- To be truly democratic women are 51% of the population
 - Men and women work well together
 - If more women it encourages children to consider politics

- Men apply 50% to a job while women tend to apply 90%

14. **Barriers**

- You need to find out what is standing in the way of women in Political Parties
- Hustings – can be aggressive and put women off
- Putting women in non-winnable seats
- Treating women differently i.e. testing women's ability but not men

15. **Challenges**

- If the seat has always been a man – put a woman in the place
- Not having enough women at every level including Party Managers
- Men need to be trained also in ensuring gender equality

16. **Other actions to consider by Parties and the Assembly**

- Get out and find more women
- Shadow and mentoring schemes (women with men)
- Recognise women who may not have been Party members previously may be now the best candidate
- Recognise public appointments is important as a pathway to politics
- Party Leaders play a major role
- Remember 51% of the electorate are women
- Unless you do something nothing will change
- To consider how best to pay for election costs for those women who may not have the means
- How the media treats women
- Women need to be motivated and need mechanism of support
- Role models not only with the Parties but also within the Assembly and this includes business leaders and board members
- Engage more with community activists to increase more women
- Introduce gender quotas
- Childcare allowance for women (and men) as in Westminster
- More role models within the Assembly such as Directors
- The Caucus is positive as women work well together and get more information when together

To be considered:

- **Is the Review of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly too narrow? Should consideration be given to those not yet in politics but ready for public appointments?**
- **Recognise what the Presiding Officer indicated on the need for senior management within the NI Assembly?**
- **As raised by an AM what is the Committee's view on childcare for Members?**

Kate Bennett, National Director for Wales Equality and Human Rights Commission

17. Ms Bennett reinforced the success of the National Assembly for Wales in 50/50 was due to positive action by political parties. As for future elections - "there are so many unknowns because of UKIP".

Observations / Recommendations:

- Women tend to have less support, less business backers – these need to be addressed
- Women do well with support within the Parties – for example the Labour Party had a Women's Action Committee which was very successful
- Any special measures needs to be cross party agreed and implemented
- Training for women is necessary
- Lists should have one man and one women for selection
- The new institution of the Assembly allowed for a creation of a new system
- Local Councils have very poor representation of all groups including women, ethnic minority groups and young people
- The Welsh government is considering implementing the Norwegian style quotas into the public appointments system but there is uncertainty of the legal side regarding employment law
- The Welsh government would need to have more powers
- Considered the positive action by the Irish Government as a useful action but in Wales the Parties do not receive funding
- There is no Gender Equality Strategy, there is an equality plan but is around general not specific on increasing women in decision making roles
- There is mention in the Programme for Government for investigation into Norwegian quotas but that many not happen as they may not have the power

To be considered:

- **Should there be an additional questionnaire for Political Parties other than the 'Call for Evidence' or should the 'Call for Evidence' have further questions regarding gender planning for the elections in 2016?**
- **Should the Committee investigate the Irish Government's approach to the new legislation?**
- **What would be the powers if any change to the legislation was suggested by the AERC?**

Joy Kent, Chief Executive of Chwarae Teg

18. Ms Kent described for the Members the role of Chwarae Teg as implementing an Initiative of the Presiding Officer's to train and develop women for public appointments. Chwarae Teg won the contract and based their application on the following:

- to train women on public life as early as possible
- mentoring would be with women and men
- there will be 12 places
- the programme would run for 2 years
- by the end of the 2nd year women should have been placed in a public appointment (although some women will not need 2 years)

19. Following advertising the first training programme:
- 250 women expressed an interest
 - 65 completed the application form
 - 15 will be selected (18 June)
 - 12 people will be offered a place
20. Ms Kent reported Chwarae Teg has:
- engaged with groups and organisations has revamped its 'friends of Chwarae Teg' and at present has over 5,000 members
 - opened up the appointment process to attract more women
 - been successful in engaging Assembly Members to actively work on this programme
 - identified that it can attract more than 12 per year and is considering ways to keep those who were not successful engaged by preparing them for the programme in the future
21. Ms. Kent reported one of the major obstacles is the media, including social media as there is no privacy.

Dr. Paul Chaney

22. **Why have women in the Assembly for Wales been successful?**

The success has mostly been due to the will of some Political Parties in drawing up their lists – e.g. women, man, woman, man.

23. **Why are the figures for women in the Assembly going down?**

One of the reasons offered is that women have served 2 terms and now wish to leave and there would need to be women being replaced by women.

24. **What needs to happen to maintain/ increase women in Wales?**

Hard enforcement – positive action has been a 'sticking plaster' with the Assembly which was ideal as it was a new institution but it will fall down if there are no quotas.

Cultural change – many women don't see themselves as political yet when you talk to them on a one to one basis they are very political. There is lack of awareness.

Gender equality training should be part of the education curriculum.

Political Parties – Introducing zipping, twinning, clustering, mentoring, training – as many levers as possible.

International Obligations – Ensure gender is included not only in any responses to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination but also in the Convention for Disabled, Children etc. these can be used as another lever.

Gender Sensitive Parliaments



Gender-Sensitive Parliaments

Towards parliaments that respond to the needs and interests of both men and women in their structures, operations, methods and work



The Executive Summary contains an overview of key findings from the survey on gender-sensitive parliaments carried out by the IPU in 2009 and 2010.

It is based on a full-length publication on gender-sensitive parliaments, written by Dr. Sonia Palmieri, for the IPU (2011).

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Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2008, the Inter-Parliamentary Union began a collaborative project to examine the gender sensitivity of parliaments around the world. The IPU worked in partnership with the UNDP-Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region and International IDEA in Latin America.

The project builds on the IPU's 30-year experience in research on gender and parliament, and directly follows on from its 2008 research publication *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*. A clear finding of that survey was that women are overwhelmingly the drivers of change in terms of gender equality in parliament, and that the time may have come to lay some of the responsibility for that change with parliaments as a whole. The question then became: what are parliaments as institutions doing to encourage and foster gender equality? What policies inform gender equality efforts? Are the institutional structures of parliaments around the world gender-sensitive?

The purpose of the Gender-Sensitive Parliaments project was to gather primary information on the ways in which parliaments can best become gender-sensitive institutions and effectively mainstream gender into their work. Primary research (including survey questionnaires, interviews with parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, and the production of country case studies) was carried out between 2009 and 2010.

The project's objectives are to:

1. Increase knowledge on gender-sensitive parliaments

The project aimed to investigate the gender-sensitivity of parliament in terms of its operational and institutional culture. The operational culture of parliament can be reflected in different ways, such as parliamentary facilities, sitting times, budget allocations and services available. The institutional culture refers to the unwritten rules, norms and mores adopted over time which are inherent to institutions that were primarily designed by men.

The project also aimed to distil current best practices in the area of gender mainstreaming in policy development in parliament, and examine the mechanisms that best support it, such as parliamentary committees and caucuses of women parliamentarians, or the use of gender budgeting.

2. Provide tools for parliaments and other stakeholders on gender-sensitive parliaments and gender mainstreaming

Based on the research conducted, the project aims to highlight examples of best practice, and distill guidelines and benchmarks which can be used to assess the gender sensitivity of parliaments and their capacity for gender mainstreaming. The guidelines would also suggest different reforms that may be made by parliaments to forge more gender-sensitive institutions.

3. Build capacity for gender-sensitive parliaments

The project further aimed to bolster the capacity of parliaments to become more gender-sensitive institutions, for example by supporting the capacity of parliamentary committees and caucuses to address gender equality through technical assistance and training activities. It is intended that a series of initiatives will be carried out to promote these activities in parliaments and raise awareness among key stakeholders.

Questionnaires for parliamentary authorities, parliamentary groups and individual members of parliament were designed in 2008 after consultation with both parliamentarians and gender and parliament experts. Ninety-five responses were received from parliamentary authorities in 77 countries. Seventy-one parliamentary groups from 42 countries completed the second survey, and 123 parliamentarians from 50 countries responded to the third survey. Roughly, an equal number of men and women MPs responded to the survey.

In addition to the questionnaires, face to face interviews were held with men and women parliamentarians from every region of the world. Many of these interviews were conducted as part of country case studies prepared between 2009 and 2010. Countries were selected on the basis of recent innovations in the national parliament and emerging good practices. National case studies as well as regional reports were prepared (see Appendix 1 for more on methodology). The global report reflects all of this research.

The following is a brief summary of the report and a presentation of its main findings and recommendations.





Executive Summary

Creating a gender-sensitive parliament

A gender-sensitive parliament is one that responds to the needs and interests of both men and women in its structures, operations, methods and in its work. The term 'gender' refers to the social attributes associated with being male and female and the relationships between women, men, girls and boys. These attributes and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization. The concept of gender also includes the expectations about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviors of both women and men, and when applied to social analysis, reveals socially constructed roles. Sex and gender do not mean the same thing. While sex refers to biological differences, gender refers to social differences, which can be modified since gender identity, roles and relations are determined by society.¹

A gender-sensitive parliament is founded on the principle of **gender equality** – that is, that both men and women have an equal right to participate in its structures and processes, without discrimination and without recrimination. **Parliaments that are gender-sensitive** have no barriers to women's full participation and set a positive example (or role model) to society at large. They are institutions which favour less aggressive parliamentary language and behaviour; more family-friendly sitting hours; the introduction of childcare facilities and parental leave for MPs; and gender-sensitive training programmes for all MPs.

A parliament that meets the basic premise of gender equality is one where rules are accessible to all MPs, do not exclude, restrict or discriminate against women, and provide for gender neutral language. They are organisations that accept the need to review all policies, laws and practices from a gender perspective, either through a dedicated committee on gender equality or by sharing that responsibility across all bodies of the parliament. Gender-sensitive parliaments work in accordance with **gender equality policies** which provide direction for setting priorities against strategic and well targeted interventions to achieve the goal of gender equality.

In becoming gender-sensitive, parliaments adopt the strategy of gender mainstreaming. **Gender mainstreaming** is the process of assessing and taking into account the impact on women and men of

any planned action – including legislation, policies or programmes – at all levels and in all spheres. Its ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. It is understood as strategies that put gender issues at the centre of broad policy and programme decisions, institutional structures and resource allocation. Mainstreaming gender equality in the work of parliament should contribute to effective implementation and oversight of legislation and policies that address the needs and interests of both men and women.

Using everyday opportunities to mainstream gender equality

A gender-sensitive parliament is also one that promotes gender equality and aims at achieving it within society at large. To do so, it therefore mainstreams gender throughout its work processes and outputs. Members of Parliament can assume the responsibility to mainstream gender in their everyday activities: legislating, overseeing and representing.

In **legislating**, MPs are required to draft and debate laws and policies, and review and approve the national budget. From a gender perspective, MPs can initiate gender equality laws and institute gender-based analysis of all legislation; ask questions about the effect of the proposed law on men and women during legislative debates; and consider whether taxation and the allocation of expenditure is equitable for men and women, or at least does not have a negative effect on either.

MPs always need to remember who the target public of a draft law is, and be aware of how that bill may affect different sub-groups of that public, most particularly women and men, girls and boys.

The concept of gender also includes the expectations about the characteristics, aptitudes and likely behaviors of both women and men, and when applied to social analysis, reveals socially constructed roles.



In carrying out their **oversight** responsibilities, MPs scrutinise government activity and expenditure through debates, questioning and inquiries. For example:

- during question time (or interpellation), MPs can seek to ask ministers about the effectiveness of their programmes in terms of gender equality. Raising questions in this forum attaches publicity to an issue;
- MPs can send written questions to ministers or their departments when they require more substantial responses, including sex-disaggregated data;
- during budget debates, MPs can question ministers on public expenditure and its impact for women and men, girls and boys;
- as members of a committee, MPs can ask a broad range of groups and individuals, including public agencies, academics, or private organizations about their views on the effectiveness of government programmes and activities;
- MPs can use the media to publicise their findings.

The **representative** function of parliament includes being accountable to the people, representing the needs and interests of citizens and informing constituents about debates, new laws, government spending and policies. From a gender perspective, MPs need to ensure that they understand and reflect the needs of the diverse groups in their constituency. They can do this by ensuring equal access for all citizens to their constituency office,

especially opening their doors at times when both men and women can attend.

MPs also need to ensure they have good networks with a broad range of groups in their electorates and at the national level, including representatives of national women's machineries, NGOs, unions, and academics working on gender equality issues. Women's parliamentary caucuses have been created in this vein. MPs can use opportunities such as conferences, forums, study tours, exposure visits and workshops to network with other parliamentarians, the media and civil society. Building and maintaining strong networks enables parliamentarians to keep informed about gender issues. Men and women need to work together to promote gender equality.

Ultimately, parliamentarians need to use the opportunities they have not only to ask questions but to publicize the answers they receive. Where legislation falls short of the needs, MPs have the opportunity to propose solutions through amendments to existing legislation, or by initiating entirely new laws.

Making systematic change for gender equality

Improving the inclusivity of parliaments is a multi-faceted challenge for all. In addition to a broader, more fundamental push for democracy, it requires a combination of greater numbers of women; stronger gender-sensitive infrastructure;

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Creating a gender-sensitive parliament

and stronger gender equality policy and legislation. These recommendations are elaborated below.

1. Increase the number and presence of women in parliament

While the number of women parliamentarians has increased over time, it does not yet match the proportion of women in society more broadly. In January 2011, women accounted for 19% of parliamentarians worldwide. Facilitating women's access to parliament remains a challenge in all corners of the globe.

Over time, legislated special measures have proven effective as one mechanism to increase women's presence in parliaments. To achieve the goal of gender equality in terms of numbers, parliaments could promote legislated special measures, such as mechanisms aimed at ensuring that greater numbers of women are selected by parties to run for election in 'electable' positions on the ballot. Amendments can be made to electoral laws, constitutions and political party platforms. Legislated measures should include sanctions where parties do not meet the standards set out in legislation.

While numbers of women are important, it is also vital to have **women in positions of parliamentary leadership**. There are relatively few women presiding officers (or deputy officers) in the parliaments of the world. While they are increasingly taking up the position of committee chair, women tend to chair committees of the 'soft' portfolio areas such as women's affairs, law and justice, labour and education. The process of

appointing women to committees is dominated by the political parties and parliamentary groups. Change would entail a more transparent method that matches members' abilities, diverse working experiences, and preferences. An affirmative action measure that gives preference to women over men in cases where qualifications were equal, would also improve the acceptability of women leaders. In Iraq, for example, positions of power reserved for women are commensurate with their representation in the parliament (25 per cent).

2. Develop an adequate legal framework for gender equality

A number of countries have pursued **gender equality laws** which tend to cover a broad range of non-discrimination measures. Such laws have been vital to achieving progress for men and women. Where such laws have not yet been enacted by parliament, they should be. Where gender equality laws are over ten years old, they should be updated to include frameworks for gender mainstreaming.

Gender equality laws also need to address the question of gender mainstreaming in parliament. Who, or what body, is responsible for reviewing legislation from a gender perspective? Is that body supported by adequate parliamentary infrastructure, such as a committee with powers to monitor the implementation of the law, and more particularly, the gender mainstreaming framework? Some parliaments were of the view that legislative impact assessments which accompany each legislative initiative could include a gender component.

Parliaments and women: how much progress

Overview	1995	2011
Proportion of seats held by women in all houses	11.3%	19%
	7 out of 229 (3.0%)	43 out of 262 (16.4%)
Chambers with 30% or more women members	• 5 single or lower houses • 2 upper houses	• 26 single or lower houses • 17 upper houses
Chambers with 10% or less women members	141 out of 229 (61.6%)	62 out of 262 (23.6%)
Chambers with no women members	13	10
Women presiding officers	24 (10.5%)	38 (14.1%)

Rwanda

Auditing for gender equality

In Rwanda an 'internal participatory gender audit' was carried out by Parliament in 2009. The audit aimed at providing data on the status of gender mainstreaming efforts and allowing the Parliament to plan accurately and effectively to fill capacity gaps with regard to gender mainstreaming. Preliminary results provided data to confirm MPs' assertions that 'capacity issues' more than commitment were at the heart of their remaining challenges. Though the MPs and staff

surveyed reported a high degree of familiarity with common gender mainstreaming terms and concepts, relatively few indicated that they knew how to conduct gender analysis or apply gender concepts to their work in Parliament. It also highlighted the need to provide training and capacity building to staff as well as MPs. The audit also facilitated an institution-wide response to meet gender equality goals and objectives.¹⁷

Plans of action that detail concrete measures would also assist parliaments in identifying the gaps in their legislation and overall policy objectives.

3. Develop a gender-sensitive policy framework for parliament

A gender policy for parliament can be understood as a road map or plan that outlines the parliament's commitment to gender equality and details a clear set of objectives and processes that are set to achieve that commitment. Under this overarching policy, there should be a suite of related policies addressing internal functioning and overall output objectives.

With regard to the **internal functioning of parliament**, policies would include prevention of harassment, the equitable distribution of resources and allowances – including access to research services, computers and office space – and expected behavior set down in a code of conduct.

While **codes of conduct** appear to be relatively common, they do not, as a rule, include references to gender equality. This is a significant weakness which requires more attention, not only by parliaments but by bodies such as the IPU. While parliaments were mostly of the view that resources and allowances are distributed equally, it is telling that women remain under-represented in those positions that attract higher allowances (such as Speaker or committee chair). Plans of action are required to ensure women are not always the last candidate to be considered

for a promotion. Policies which seek to prevent harassment are very rare, and while complaints mechanisms are in place in some parliaments, it is questionable whether these are independent of the political process.

4. Mainstream gender in parliament's work

Gender equality is not guaranteed simply because there are women in parliament. It is more a question of how gender-sensitive and gender aware the parliament, its policies, and its infrastructure are.

Taking stock

A first step is to carry out an **internal assessment** of parliament's capacity to mainstream gender. This can take the shape of an internal audit, as has been done in Rwanda.

Dedicated gender mainstreaming infrastructure

There are two main institutional parliamentary mechanisms that can assist parliaments in ensuring parliament's outputs have been analyzed from a gender perspective: gender equality committees and women's parliamentary caucuses. **Gender equality committees** act as an incubator for policy ideas on gender equality and help to keep gender issues on the parliament's agenda. Their advantage lies in their ability to work closely – and establish formal relationships – with national women's machineries, ombudsmen for equality, and non-governmental organizations. A good practice prevails in Pakistan where the gender equality committee's reports are sent directly to the relevant Minister.

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Some committees have been able to influence policy on a range of issues including education, healthcare, and employment, to name a few. A strength of these committees is their permanent structure – they are bodies of the parliament like any other committee and have the same resources (budget and staff) allocated to them. In some parliaments, however, gender equality committees have been given slightly different (advisory) status, which changes their ability to pursue action on the recommendations they make.

Generally, however, gender equality committees were seen as being equal to other parliamentary committees, and as effective. Limits on these committees' effectiveness related to the focus of their inquiries, the number of women in parliament, the abilities of the chair and the extent to which they were supported by the parliamentary leadership. Gender equality committees can also give support and co-operate with other portfolio committees, encouraging them to consider issues of gender equality relating to their subject matter. In this case, the gender equality committee plays the role of initiating, supporting and monitoring what other portfolio committees do to mainstream gender.

Where gender mainstreaming is concentrated in the work of a dedicated gender equality committee, this committee should have the same role, responsibilities and powers of

Gender equality committees can also give support and co-operate with other portfolio committees, encouraging them to consider issues of gender equality relating to their subject matter.

other parliamentary committees and should be similarly resourced. Where possible, parliamentary staff supporting the work of gender equality committees should work with them for at least one parliamentary term to ensure that gender expertise is not lost too frequently. It is vital that these committees be recognised as permanent structures of the parliament.

The process by which these committees mainstream gender should be explicit and made clear on public information sites (including the parliamentary web site). Committees on gender equality should have systematic consultation processes with women's organizations and gender experts, particularly when reviewing draft legislation. The committees should have access to sex-disaggregated data, so that initiatives can be analysed for their cost benefits.

Where parliaments have chosen not to establish a dedicated gender equality committee, these

Sweden

Raising the profile of gender equality issues

The Speakers Network for Gender Equality among MPs was established in 1992 by the Speaker, Erna Dähl. In the early spring of 1992, she invited seven female MPs, one from each of the parties in parliament, to a meeting. In preparation for this, each of these united forces could contribute to making the best use of the new and potent representation of women in parliament. Many ideas have emerged from the conversations within the group. These have, for instance, resulted in the establishment and maintenance of several cross-party committees of parliament.

The purpose of this network was to shed light on the conditions and assumptions governing parliamentary and political work in a broad perspective, and the possibilities of development for individual members and for parliament as a whole. The arrangement of breakfast meetings and side-meeting seminars on gender equality, but also democracy in a wider sense, for a few weeks of parliament was another major task. Today the speaker's network has been renamed the speakers' conference on Gender Equality Issues.

Five steps in mainstreaming a gender perspective in legislation The Cambodian Checklist

Step 1

Determine the purpose, scope and operation of the proposed law; identify the groups most likely to be affected by the proposed Bill and any likely gender implications;

Step 2

Measure the impact of the proposed law; if available, use sex-disaggregated data, but where it is not available, consider what else could be used;

Step 3

Ask specific questions regarding the legal drafting; make sure clear, plain and gender neutral language is used;

Step 4

Ask questions about administration, costs, regulations and public education; consider whether women will be involved in these processes; and

Step 5

Double check it all – make sure the 'gender question' has been raised at every stage of the analysis.²

issues are commonly addressed through a women's affairs, social policy or human rights committee. While there can be an advantage to the 'multi-portfolio' committee in that its members can apply a gender perspective to a broader range of issues, the committee has less time to addressing specific gender concerns.

Women's parliamentary caucuses are cross-party coordination groups in which women parliamentarians participate on a voluntary basis. Caucuses have brought women together across party lines and given them a framework within which to engage civil society and private sector partners. Such groups have successfully raised the need to legislate on issues relevant to women and gender equality, particularly on domestic violence, non-discrimination, healthcare and women's rights. The inclusion of men in women's caucuses has been beneficial to this outcome. Women's caucuses have been most effective, however, when women deliberately put their party to one side, and made a commitment to the caucus. Where gender mainstreaming is in the hands of a women's caucus, that caucus

should also be considered an important body of the parliament. Comments from questionnaire respondents also suggested that a clear understanding of the caucus' mission and goals, as well as sufficient funding, can increase its effectiveness.

The survey uncovered other mechanisms to raise the profile of gender equality in parliament, including the Swedish Speaker's Network on Gender Equality.

Developing tools and capacity

Mainstreaming gender in parliament's legislative work requires knowledge and expertise. This study has revealed varied understandings of the meaning of gender, gender mainstreaming and gender-sensitive parliaments. While some parliaments are well versed in these concepts, in others there is little awareness and knowledge of gender and its relationship with the legislature's work (technical, administrative and legislative). There is also conceptual confusion and insufficient understanding of how parliament can oversee gender issues. Parliaments may wish to

Executive Summary

Creating a gender-sensitive parliament

Mexico

Getting the right information

The Research Center for Women's Advancement and Gender Equality in Mexico (CEAMEG) was established as another research center at the service of Congress. Its mission is to: support legislative work from a gender and human rights perspective, by providing specialized technical support and analytical information services that help ensure equality between women and men and promote the advancement of women within the framework of the Mexican state's democratic processes.

This legislative research center reports the following objective: provide deputies, commissions and committees with technical support and analytical information services related to the advancement of women and gender equality in an objective, impartial and timely manner. Since its establishment in August 2005, CEAMEG's actions have focused on three key research areas: gender mainstreaming in public budgets; women's political participation and progress in legislative harmonization.⁴

organise training workshops on some of these concepts. Training should include the message that issues of gender equality are not only the concern and business of women.

There are, unfortunately, very few examples of 'checklists' used to verify that legislation has been adequately assessed from a gender perspective. In Cambodia, a framework was developed to guide MPs and staff in assessing the gender-sensitivity of laws. Five steps were identified, each accompanied by a set of questions to ask for a proper evaluation of the law.

There is a real concern that parliaments continue to lack sex-disaggregated data, which is ultimately the basis for all gender mainstreaming efforts. This needs to be redressed by relevant statistical agencies in government so that gender mainstreaming can move from theory to widespread practice.

Increasing familiarity with existing parliamentary mechanisms—such as participating in debates, asking questions of ministers, using 'call attention' notices, petitions or grievance debates—is also necessary. This can be achieved through



induction or orientation training that includes a gender perspective, for both new and incumbent parliamentarians. Gender-specific measures should also be institutionalized, such as **gender advisors**, (multiple) **gender focal points** on each committee, etc. Following the trend set in the parliaments of Latin America, national parliaments should also consider establishing technical units that can provide the specific information needed to advance gender mainstreaming in all areas of parliament.

5. Improve parliamentary culture and infrastructure

An entirely new area of research is the gender sensitivity of the culture and infrastructure of parliament. On entering parliament, MPs are expected to conform to the **institutional rules and norms**, both written and unwritten. These rules and norms create a parliamentary culture in which women note they are not always at ease. A feeling of being an 'outsider' springs from the use of **language** which can be derogatory and sexist, and the (occasional) incidence of sexual harassment. Over time, the **building of parliament** has had to change to be more accommodating

of women, including the basic provision of rest rooms for women. In addition, women MPs reported discrimination in the **distribution of resources** like office space, computers, staff and research facilities.

It would be useful for parliaments to analyse in detail the **maleness of the institution**, looking into culture, mores and practices when it comes to the everyday functioning of the institution, for instance with respect to the **gendered nature of procedures, speech, rituals or ceremonies**. In one parliament, it was suggested that the maleness of the institution could be analyzed by investigating the maleness of art works in the buildings of parliament or the names given to the meeting rooms.

The way in which parliament communicates to its representatives also needs to be reviewed, particularly the way in which gender issues are aired by both men and women. These should be given more visibility – a change that is increasingly being demanded by a more socially-responsible electorate.

Costa Rica Building gender expertise

Costa Rica's Technical Unit on Gender Equality and Equity falls under the office of the Assembly's Executive Director. It was created to comply with requirements established as part of the Assembly's institutional planning. The Unit's overall objective is "To promote, plan, propose, coordinate, guide, strengthen and monitor gender mainstreaming in all functions of the Legislative Assembly, in compliance with the state's commitments to gender equity and equality." More specifically, the Unit aims to:

- form a technical unit on gender with a functional, modern organizational structure to mainstream gender in all Legislative Assembly processes;
- coordinate and promote training and awareness-raising processes on gender for technical, administrative and legislative staff to develop practical tools for mainstreaming gender in legislative work;
- promote and coordinate action for institutional planning which requires gender mainstreaming;
- provide expert advice on gender to all technical-administrative legislative entities in mainstreaming gender in the legislative process, and
- create strategies for communication and coordination with civil society and organizations that facilitate public participation in gender mainstreaming in the various processes of the Legislative Assembly.

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Creating a gender-sensitive parliament

By far the greatest challenge highlighted by respondents of this study is that relating to the balance of work and family. MPs typically note that they are unable to spend a great deal of time with their family. Continuing stereotypes which see women's role in the home make this particularly difficult for women MPs and they are often fulfilling both roles.

Parliaments could ease matters by rearranging the sitting hours so that there are no late night sessions or sessions during school holidays, ensuring that all members are entitled to a leave of absence to attend to their children – not just when they are born, but whenever required. Parliaments can also make particular arrangements for women returning to the workforce after maternity leave. They can allow for a proxy vote, so that a woman who is breastfeeding does not have to attend a vote in the plenary; they can dedicate special rooms to nursing mothers; and perhaps most importantly, they can institute child care centers in parliament. Parliaments could also become more exemplary in their provision of maternity/paternity or parental leave to their members, by devising their own rules which cater to the specific circumstances of the parliamentary institution.

6. Improve the gender sensitivity of parliamentary departments

If parliaments need to become more gender-sensitive with respect to their members, this is equally true with respect to the hundreds and thousands of people who staff them. The work conditions of parliamentary staff are often the same as those of public servants. It is to be remembered, however, that staff working hours can be just as taxing as those of parliamentarians when parliament is sitting. Moreover, parliamentarians have some impact on the institutional culture of the workplace of parliamentary staff. This research uncovered examples in the dress codes of parliamentary staff (where women MPs have fought to relax them) and in cases of sexual harassment perpetrated by MPs on staff.

The study also found that parliamentary work is often sex-segregated. A more equitable distribution of work, not based on sex-stereotypes, should be the clear intent of gender equality policies in these workplaces. Gender policies

Parliaments could also become more exemplary in their provision of maternity/paternity or parental leave to their members, by devising their own rules which cater to the specific circumstances of the parliamentary institution.

should see the promotion of greater numbers of women to leadership positions, even where this could be the result of affirmative action measures that prefer women over men.

There has also been limited training of parliamentary staff on gender issues. Parliaments rarely acknowledge that people with gender equality expertise have particular skills that can be harnessed in parliamentary work. It has instead been a considerable challenge to capture and maintain the professional skills of the technical gender teams. This trend must be reversed.

For these reasons, the workplace culture and infrastructure of parliamentary staff needs to be kept under constant review.

Sharing the responsibility for gender equality

Gender equality is not achieved by the mere presence of women in parliament. It can only be achieved if it is understood as the responsibility of all stakeholders of society. In this respect, men have a special role to play, as do political parties.

Include men to promote gender equality

There is an increasing acceptance (among women and men) that men need to participate in parliamentary activities aimed at ensuring gender equality. This acceptance comes as a result of changing social attitudes, and the related understanding among the electorate that women can no longer be excluded from the political sphere – indeed, that there can be a political backlash when women and gender issues are ignored by the political elite.

Men are therefore increasingly coming on board. They are co-sponsoring legislative initiatives to ensure non-discrimination – and some are even sponsoring these initiatives themselves. Men have been appointed to chair or participate in gender equality bodies of the parliament. It was suggested that changes be made to the rules of the parliament to require that both men and women be present on all parliamentary committees – including those relating to gender equality – so that all issues could be considered from a gender perspective (which, by definition, includes the views of men).

A successful initiative in encouraging men's participation has been the inclusion of men in public outreach activities to raise awareness of gender equality issues. Men have participated in celebratory activities for International Women's Day, have joined delegations to the annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women, and have been included on field visits to sites of obvious and manifest discrimination.

Increase political parties' responsibility for gender mainstreaming

Political parties are generally not considered as open and transparent organizations. Despite the rhetoric of being open to women's participation, parties remain dominated by men. This is important as political parties are increasingly the dominant form of political organization and the mechanism through which women and men can advance a legislative platform for gender equality.

The influence of parties on MPs wishing to pursue a gender equality legislative agenda is key. The main avenue for women's participation within parties is through a 'women's wing' or 'organization'. While this strategy has some benefits, it can also

isolate women from men. Nonetheless, parties are working towards a gender equality policy by holding seminars and lectures by gender experts on important topics, and by creating strong links with academia and non-governmental organizations. Parties should push for amendments to their internal statutes and rules to ensure women's representation in both membership and leadership of their structures.

Women have discovered barriers to their equal participation in the executive, decision-making structures of political parties, either because they are heavily outnumbered by men, or because they require resources which they do not readily have at their disposal. Moreover, both women and men frequently face difficulties in tabling legislative proposals without the agreement of their party – and can face serious consequences if they do so, including expulsion from the party. Some women have in fact resorted to remaining silent for the sake of party consensus.

Gender mainstreaming, as a strategy for pursuing gender equality more comprehensively, is rarely adopted by political parties. This is often because of a lack of resources (both financial and human), and a lack of political will. In fact, some parties are of the view that there is no need to adopt gender mainstreaming practices. Other parties, however, are more aware of the need for gender mainstreaming, and are more concerned with the need to ensure monitoring and evaluation of their gender mainstreaming work. The need for monitoring networks is one area that requires far more strength and support. In addition, parties could adopt overarching gender equality plans with clear gender mainstreaming strategies, and establish dedicated party committees to oversee their implementation.



Inter-Parliamentary Union

Executive Summary

Appendix 1

Research methodology

Three sets of **questionnaires** were designed in 2008 following consultation with both parliamentarians and gender and parliament experts. These questionnaires were directed to:

1. Parliamentary authorities, seeking information on the policies, frameworks and infrastructure that may provide for inclusive parliaments;
2. Parliamentary (party) groups in parliament, seeking information on the decision-making processes and inclusiveness of parliamentary (party) groups; and
3. Parliamentarians, seeking information on the views and perspectives of parliamentarians on the inclusiveness of parliaments.

Ninety-five responses were received from parliamentary authorities in 77 countries. Seventy-one parliamentary party groups from 42 countries completed the second survey, and 123 parliamentarians from 50 countries responded to the third survey. An almost equal number of men and women MPs responded to the survey (see 'Profiling of respondents' below for more details).

Responses to each survey were entered into an online database created with the assistance of the Swedish-based internet technology consultancy firm *Transmachina* and held at www.gender-parliaments.org.

In addition to the questionnaires, interviews were held with men and women parliamentarians from every region of the world. Many of these interviews were conducted as part of in country case studies prepared between 2009 and 2010. Countries were selected on the basis of recent innovations in the national parliament and emerging good practices. A regional report for each region of the world has been prepared. National case studies, distributed across the regions, were also prepared:

Africa

- Rwanda
- South Africa (and others in preparation)

Arab States

- Jordan

- Tunisia

Asia-Pacific

- Australia
- Cambodia
- Malaysia
- Viet Nam

Europe

- Belgium
- Spain
- Sweden

Latin America

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Costa Rica
- Mexico
- Peru

Based on visits to (and observation of) the parliament and meetings with a range of stakeholders including MPs, parliamentary administration staff and (in some cases) civil society representatives, each national case study aimed to:

- identify the main entry points for gender mainstreaming in the parliament, i.e. the avenues through which a gender equality perspective can be heard, or a forum where women members of parliament can debate issues of mutual concern, including parliamentary committees (viz. those that specialize in gender equality), caucuses of women parliamentarians, research capability, gender budgeting initiatives, plenary debates, liaison with civil society etc.
- identify how 'gender-sensitive' the parliament is, including any special infrastructure arrangements such as feeding rooms or crèches, allocated budget for gender concerns, a review of sitting times to address the needs of MPs with families, and gender neutral/sensitive language.
- seek to investigate the 'unwritten' rules, practices and mores that may be discriminating, for example 'old boys' clubs', harassment, language, exclusion, etc.

- analyze how the parliament is performing in terms of gender mainstreaming, identifying examples of good practice, and highlighting challenges that need to be addressed.

Endnotes

1. Definitions taken from UN/OSAGI, UNDP and UNESCO as quoted in UNDP, *Quick Entry Points to Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality in Democratic Governance Clusters*, New York, 2007 and IPU, *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*, Geneva, 2008
2. Source: Case study, Rwanda
3. From Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Project, February 2003, "The Key Steps of Gender Analysis of Legislation"
4. Source: Case study, Mexico
5. Source: Case study, Costa Rica

Image references

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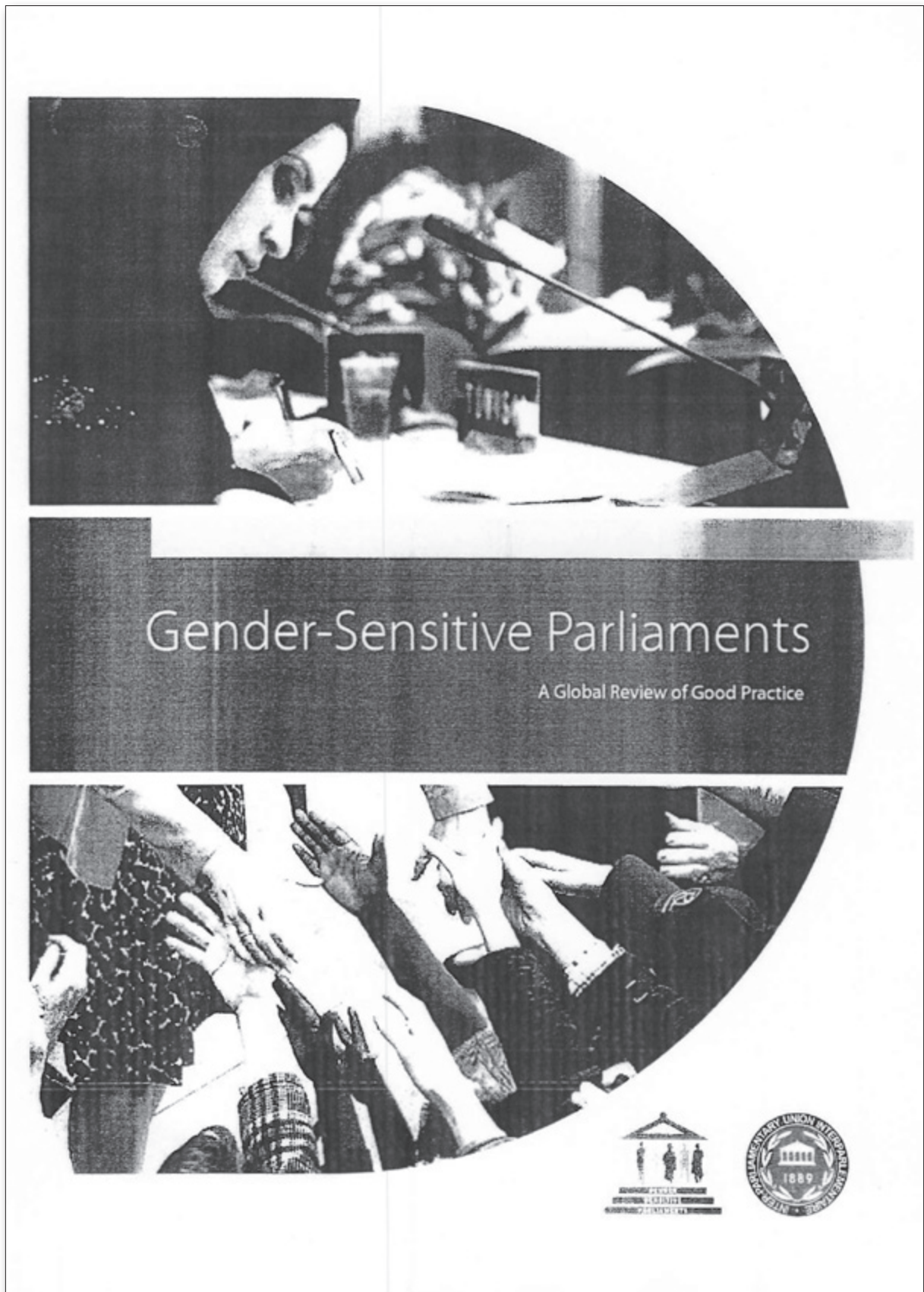
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Gender-Sensitive Parliaments

A Global Review of Good Practice

Written by Dr. Sonia Palmieri



Overview

In 2008, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) began a collaborative project to examine the gender sensitivity of parliaments around the world, working in partnership with the UNDP Parliamentary Development Initiative in the Arab Region and with International IDEA in Latin America.

The project builds on the IPU's 30 years of research on gender and parliament, and directly follows on from the IPU's 2008 research publication *Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments*. A clear finding of that survey was that women are overwhelmingly the main drivers of change in terms of gender equality in parliament, and that there was scope to lay some of the responsibility for that change with parliaments more broadly.

The project's aim was to investigate the gender sensitivity of parliaments in terms of their operational and institutional culture. A parliament's operational culture is reflected in different ways: the facilities available, sitting times, budget allocations and services. Institutional culture refers to the unwritten rules, norms and mores adopted over time in institutions primarily designed by men.

The project also set out to distil current best practices for mainstreaming gender in policy development and parliamentary work and to examine the mechanisms best suited for that purpose, such as parliamentary committees, caucuses of women parliamentarians or the use of gender budgeting.

Three sets of questionnaires (see Appendix II) were designed in 2008 following consultation with parliamentarians and experts on gender and parliament. Ninety-five responses to the first questionnaire were received from parliamentary authorities in 77 countries. Seventy-one parliamentary party groups from 42 countries completed the second questionnaire, and 123 parliamentarians from 50 countries responded to the third. The responses came in equal numbers from men and women members (see Appendix I).

In addition to the questionnaires, face-to-face interviews were held with men and women parliamentarians from every region of the world, many as part of country case studies prepared between 2008 and 2009. Countries

were selected on the basis of recent innovations and emerging good practices in their respective parliaments. National case studies as well as a regional report were prepared for each region. All of that research is reflected in this report.

The report is divided into eleven chapters, with **Chapter one** serving as an overall introduction and providing definitions of key concepts used throughout the survey.

Promoting women to key positions in parliament

While the numbers of women in parliament are important, it is also vital to have women in positions of parliamentary leadership. Among other things, women in these positions present a positive role model to other women. Throughout the world, however, relatively few women serve as presiding officers of their respective parliaments, and only marginally greater numbers serve as deputy (or vice) presidents or speakers. **Chapter two** of this report looks at women's parliamentary participation worldwide and at various measures adopted to improve it.

Chapter three describes how access to leadership positions most commonly results from rule changes and temporary special measures. Women have also created their own paths to leadership by learning the rules and taking advantage of changing political circumstances. And of course the more women enter parliament, the easier their access to leadership positions becomes.

While the number of women occupying committee chair positions has increased, the committees concerned tend to specialize in the "soft" portfolio areas, such as women's affairs, employment and education. The process of appointing women to committees (both as chairs and as members) is dominated by the political parties, and the mechanisms for promoting women tend to be based on "conventions" rather than explicit rules. Progress on this front will require more transparent methods of matching leadership positions with members' abilities, diverse working experience, and preferences. Affirmative action – giving preference to women where qualifications are equal – could also pave the way for more women leaders.

Pursuing gender equality through legislation and debate

Parliaments need to ensure that the legislation they pass does not discriminate against men or women, but rather actively promotes gender equality. **Chapter four** discusses gender equality laws pursued in various countries, featuring a broad range of anti-discrimination measures. Parliaments that have not passed such laws should do so, and gender equality laws over ten years old should be updated to include gender mainstreaming frameworks. There are, unfortunately, very few examples of “checklists” to verify that legislation has been adequately assessed from a gender perspective. Parliaments should review existing gender-mainstreaming models, modify them to suit their own individual circumstances and provide adequate training for proper implementation.

Laws addressing gender equality also require gender mainstreaming. Who or what body is responsible for reviewing legislation from a gender perspective? Is that body supported by adequate infrastructure, to monitor the implementation of such laws and the gender mainstreaming framework? Some of the parliaments surveyed suggested that legislative impact assessments (which currently accompany each legislative initiative in many countries) include a gender component.

What are the best strategies for promoting gender equality laws? The members surveyed referred to strategies for linking such legislation to the broader discourse on development or financial crisis. Others spoke about the importance of choosing the right moment to introduce such legislation.

Promoting gender equality also requires familiarity with existing parliamentary mechanisms – how to participate effectively in debates, ask questions of ministers or use “call attention” notices, petitions or grievance debates. This can be achieved through induction or orientation training that incorporates a gender perspective, for both new and incumbent parliamentarians. Gender-specific measures, such as gender advisors, (multiple) gender focal points on each committee and gender budgeting, should also be institutionalised.

Dedicated gender mainstreaming infrastructure

Gender equality is not guaranteed simply by the presence of women in parliament. It depends on a parliament’s gender sensitivity and awareness, its policies and infrastructure.

Chapter five looks at how two mechanisms – gender equality committees and women’s parliamentary caucuses – can help a parliament ensure that its output has been properly analysed from a gender perspective. Gender equality committees act as incubators for policy

ideas on gender equality and help to keep gender issues on the parliament’s agenda. Their value lies in their ability to work closely with national women’s machinery, ombudsmen and non-governmental organisations. Some of these committees have influenced policy on a range of issues including education, healthcare and employment, to name a few. Their permanent structure is a particular asset, entitling them to the same resources (budget and staff) as any other committee.

While gender equality committees have a slightly different (advisory) status in some parliaments, affecting their ability to act on the recommendations made, they are generally seen as being equal to other parliamentary committees, and as effective. On the other hand, factors cited as limiting the effectiveness of such committees related to the focus of their inquiries, the number of women in parliament, the capacity of committee chairs and the extent to which they receive support from parliamentary leadership.

Gender equality committees can also support and cooperate with other portfolio committees, encouraging them to consider issues of gender equality relevant to their respective purviews and initiating, supporting and monitoring steps to mainstream gender.

Where parliaments have chosen not to establish a dedicated gender equality committee, these issues are commonly addressed through a social policy or human rights committee. Such ‘multi-portfolio’ committees have the advantage of being able to apply a gender perspective to a broader range of issues but the disadvantage of having less time for specific gender concerns.

Women’s parliamentary caucuses are cross-party coordination groups in which women parliamentarians participate on a voluntary basis. Caucuses have brought women together across party lines and given them a framework within which to engage civil society and private sector partners. Such groups have successfully raised the need to legislate on issues relevant to women and gender equality, and particularly domestic violence, non-discrimination, healthcare and women’s rights. The inclusion of men in women’s caucuses has been beneficial to this outcome. Women’s caucuses have been most effective when their members have deliberately put their parties to one side and made a commitment to the caucus – and also, according to comments from questionnaire respondents, when they have a clear understanding of the caucus’s mission and goals as well as sufficient funding.

Other innovative mechanisms have surfaced to raise the profile of gender equality in parliament, including speakers’ network on gender equality, research think tanks, and internal participatory gender audits. These new initiatives notwithstanding, there is a real concern that parliaments continue to lack access to

data disaggregated by sex, which ultimately provides the basis for all gender mainstreaming efforts. This needs to be redressed by relevant statistical agencies in government so that gender mainstreaming can move from theory to widespread practice.

The contribution of men parliamentarians to gender equality

The idea that men need to participate in parliamentary activities aimed at ensuring gender equality has gained increasing acceptance, among women and men. This acceptance has resulted from changing social attitudes and growing consensus within the electorate that women can no longer be excluded from the political sphere. Indeed, there can be political backlash when women's and gender issues are ignored by the political elite.

Men are therefore increasingly coming on board. As **Chapter six** outlines, they are co-sponsoring, and in some cases even sponsoring, legislative initiatives to ensure non-discrimination against women. Men have also been appointed to chair or to participate in their parliaments' gender equality bodies. A suggestion received among the survey responses was that parliamentary rules be changed to require the presence of men and women on all parliamentary committees – including those relating to gender equality – so that all issues could be considered from a gender perspective (which, by definition, includes the views of men).

A successful initiative to encourage men's participation has been the inclusion of men in public outreach activities, to raise awareness of gender equality issues. Men have participated in celebratory activities for International Women's Day, delegations to the annual Commission on the Status of Women and field visits to sites of obvious and manifest discrimination.

Above all, the chapter underscores the need for men to be aware of and shoulder their responsibilities with respect to gender equality.

Policies and procedures

A common misconception is that gender equality policy means quota laws or a national, government-focused gender agenda. As far as parliaments are concerned, gender policy can be understood as something different: a road map for outlining a parliament's commitment to gender equality, with a clear and detailed set of objectives and processes for achieving it. Under this overarching policy should be a suite of related policies to prevent harassment, distribute resources and allowances equitably – including access to research services, computers and office space – and define expected behaviour in a code of conduct.

Chapter seven looks at the various policies and procedures in place in parliaments. While codes of conduct appear to be relatively common, they do not, as a rule, include references to gender equality. This gap is a significant weakness requiring more attention, not only from parliaments, but from bodies such as the IPU. While parliaments were mostly of the view that resources and allowances are distributed equally, it is telling that women remain under-represented in those positions that attract higher allowances (such as Speaker or committee chair). Plans of action are required to ensure women are not always the last candidates to be considered for promotions. Policies to prevent harassment are very rare, and while grievance mechanisms are in place in some parliaments, it is not clear how independent they are of politics.

Detailed plans of action would also help parliaments identify gaps in their legislation and overall policy objectives. This could involve an initial "gender audit" of what has been done and what remains to be done.

Political parties

Political parties are generally not considered open or transparent organisations. Despite rhetoric about openness to women's participation, parties remain dominated by men. This is an issue as political parties are increasingly the dominant form of political organisation and the mechanism through which women and men can pursue a legislative platform for gender equality.

Chapter eight investigates the influence of parties on parliamentarians wishing to pursue a gender equality legislative agenda, finding that the main avenue for women's participation in a party is through a women's "wing" or "organisation". While beneficial in some respects, such an approach can also leave women ostracized. Some parties work towards gender equality by holding seminars and lectures with gender experts on important topics, and by creating strong links with stakeholders in academia and NGOs. They should also push for amendments to their internal statutes and rules to ensure women's participation both as members and leaders.

Women have encountered barriers to equal participation in the executive, decision-making structures of their parties, either because they are seriously outnumbered by men or because they require resources that women do not readily have at their disposal. Women as well as men are frequently challenged in their ability to initiate legislative proposals not condoned by their parties – facing serious consequences if they do, including expulsion from the party. Some women, in fact, choose to remain silent for the sake of party consensus.

Parties rarely resort to gender mainstreaming as a strategy for pursuing gender equality more comprehensively, often for lack of resources (both financial and human).

or political will. Some parties see no need for gender mainstreaming. Those that do often need to strengthen their monitoring and evaluation efforts, an area in need of far greater support. In addition, parties could adopt overarching gender equality plans with clear mainstreaming strategies, and establish dedicated party committees to oversee their implementation.

Parliamentary culture and infrastructure

Chapter nine presents an entirely new area of research: the gender sensitivity of a parliament's culture and infrastructure. On entering parliament, members are expected to conform to the institution's rules and norms, both written and unwritten. Such rules and norms can make for a parliamentary culture not always comfortable for women. Derogatory and sexist language and incidents of sexual harassment can make women feel like outsiders. And while parliamentary building facilities have been adapted over time to be more accommodating of women (e.g., by providing women's restrooms), some of the women members surveyed reported being discriminated against in the distribution of resources, including office space, computers, staff and research facilities.

By far the greatest challenge highlighted by survey respondents is balancing work and family. According to their responses, members are typically able to spend only limited time with their families. A particular difficulty for women members stems from continuing stereotypes about a woman's role in the home, obliging them to cover work as well as most family responsibilities.

Parliaments could address this challenge by rearranging sitting hours, with no sessions late at night or during school holidays, and by entitling all members to parental leave – not just when children are born but whenever necessary to attend to their needs. Parliaments can also make particular arrangements for women returning to work after maternity leave: allowing proxy votes (so that breastfeeding women need not attend the plenary to vote, providing special rooms for breastfeeding mothers and perhaps most importantly, establishing childcare centres in parliament).

Parliamentary departments

Parliaments need to become more gender-sensitive not only toward their members but also toward the hundreds and thousands of parliamentary staff members. **Chapter ten** investigates the working conditions of parliamentary staff, which were often found to be similar to those of public servants. It is to be remembered, however, that when parliament is sitting the hours worked by staff can be just as long as those worked by parliamentarians. Parliamentarians themselves can have an impact on the workplace culture. The research uncovered examples of women members fighting to relax the dress codes for parliamentary staff members and of parliamentarians sexually harassing staff members. For these reasons and others there is a clear need to continually examine the workplace culture and infrastructure in place for parliamentary staff.

Chapter eleven offers some conclusions and recommendations for action.

Speakers Letter dated 10 Feb 2015

The Speaker



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Stephen Moutray MLA
Assembly and Executive Review Committee
Room 276
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10 February 2015

Dear Stephen,

I know the Committee is completing its inquiry on "Women in Politics" and I thought the Committee might want to be aware of an event I am holding on Friday 6 March 2015 to mark International Women's Day that weekend.

I am delighted that Dame Rosemary Butler, Presiding Officer of the National Assembly of Wales has accepted an invitation to come to Parliament Buildings to talk about her campaign to encourage women to participate in public life. The event will also feature some short films produced as part of a Cinemagic project to mark International Women's Day. I know the Committee engaged with Dame Rosemary following her discussions with Speaker Hay. I know that Friday is a difficult day for Members but you will appreciate that we are extremely fortunate to be able to secure a slot in Dame Rosemary's diary. I therefore hope the Committee will be supportive of the event. Invites will be issued to all Members in coming weeks.

During my short time in office, it is already clear to me that the role of Speaker is one which will have many competing pressures and demands on my time. However, encouraging women into politics is an issue I will be very supportive and mindful of in the conduct of my responsibilities. During my time in office, I am keen to explore what political agreement we might be able to achieve on reforming the organisation and operation of plenary business. That is a project which will require time if it is to be successful and while it could have many benefits, I believe that initiative has the potential to have a significant impact on making the Assembly more gender friendly.

I look forward to seeing the Committee's report and I hope the event I am hosting on 6 March is a positive initiative to compliment the work the Committee has undertaken.

Yours sincerely,

MITCHEL MCLAUGHLIN MLA

SP045_15



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Appendix 5

NI Assembly Research Papers



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

3 September 2013

NIAR 570-13

Michael Potter

Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly

This paper summarises the background to women's representation in politics, outlines the legislative frameworks relevant to women's representation in the Northern Ireland Assembly and reviews some mechanisms for increasing female representation.

Executive Summary

With the exception of Dáil Éireann, the Northern Ireland Assembly has the lowest female representation of devolved and national legislatures in these islands. The introduction of quotas for women candidates in the Republic of Ireland in the next election has the potential to alter this situation.

In a European context, with the exception of Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has the lowest female representation of comparable devolved institutions in Western Europe.

International declarations, such as the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, echoed locally in the Belfast Agreement and the Gender Equality Strategy, recognise the right of women to full and equal political participation. There is debate concerning what this would mean. For example, with women 51% of the population, descriptive representation would entail 51% of representatives being female. However, substantive representation is viewed in terms of the interests of women being represented, whether by a male or female representative.

The prevalence of men in political power generates a culture that is male, which can exclude or deter women. Presence theory suggests that cultures can change when there are sufficient numbers of women, leading to ways of working that are more conducive to female participation. This is linked to critical mass theory, which examines the point at which change may take place, variously estimated at 30-40%.

Two major factors affect female representation:

- **Electoral systems** Generally, it is believed that proportional systems (PR) with high district magnitudes are more favourable to female representation, as the more available seats there are, the more chance of women being selected, as, for example, incumbents in single member districts would tend to be male. However, this is not conclusive, as first past the post systems have also returned greater numbers of women (such as the first past the post segment of elections in Wales) and PR systems have also failed to do so on occasion (such as in France).
- **Candidate selection** A clear influence on the level of female representation is the commitment of political parties to selecting women to stand for election in winnable seats. Linked to this is the need to encourage and support more women to stand to ensure a supply of eligible female candidates and counter barriers to participation they may face.

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are an excepted matter, requiring Westminster legislation to change the system. The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002, however, permits political parties to practice positive discrimination in relation to the selection of candidates.

A range of other measures have been proposed to increase female political representation:

- **Parliamentary procedures** can be changed to facilitate the participation of women, for example:
 - Family-friendly sitting hours
 - Childcare and parental leave arrangements
 - Cross-party group for women
 - Policies to promote gender equality and prohibit discrimination and harassment
 - Review of institutional behaviour, such as use of language, practices, environment, etc., from a gender perspective
 - Formalised links with NGOs working on gender issues

- Quotas, while controversial, can guarantee women's descriptive representation. These vary in percentage (30%, 40% or 50%, for example) can be legal or voluntary, with or without sanctions, and can be for candidates or seats in a legislature, or both.
- Support mechanisms for female candidates and representatives can include training, mentoring, financial assistance or material assistance, for example.
- Awareness raising generally looks at the supply side of potential candidate recruitment by encouraging more women to consider a political career and building the capacity within community groups to generate interest among women in political participation.

Larger numbers of seats tend to favour women, so conversely, reductions may affect the numbers of women returned. In this case, the reduction in the number of councils and a corresponding reduction in the number of seats may indirectly influence the supply of potential female MLAs, if council representation can be seen as an initial step in political life. Similarly, any reduction in the number of seats in the Northern Ireland Assembly may potentially impact upon female representation.

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1 Introduction

The Assembly and Executive Review Committee agreed on 2 July 2013 to commission research with regard to gender balance in the Northern Ireland Assembly¹, to discuss the following aspects:

- What measures are and could be put in place to ensure balanced gender representation among NI Assembly Members;
- What measures are in place in other Legislatures and Executives in the UK, Ireland and beyond to ensure balanced gender representation among Members;
- The legal basis with regard to gender equality, specifically on the issue above (including “reserved and excepted status”) and the “Beijing Platform”.

This paper summarises the background to the issue, outlines the legislative frameworks relevant to gender representation and reviews some mechanisms for increasing female representation used elsewhere.

2 Background

Statistical Outline

The Northern Ireland Assembly currently has 21 female Members out of a total of 108 (19.4%)², although 20 women were elected in 2011, the net increase being due to one more female than male co-option by parties replacing Members since the election. 38 female and 180 male candidates stood in the 2011 election (17.4%)³. No female candidates stood in Newry and Armagh. Historically, there have been 47 female MLAs (of 218 total, 21.6%) since the current institutions were established in 1998⁴. No women have been returned in East or North Antrim since 1998.

1 Assembly and Executive Review Committee meeting, 2 July 2013.

2 All current female MLAs are listed at Appendix 1.

3 All female candidates in the 2011 Assembly election are listed at Appendix 2.

4 A list of all female MLAs, past and present, is at Appendix 3.

The table below compares legislatures within the UK, which shows Northern Ireland has the lowest female representation⁵.

Representatives by gender

	Con	Lab	LD	Other	Total
Male					
House of Commons	257	171	50	25	503
House of Lords	172	157	63	265	657
National Assembly for Wales	10	15	4	7	36
Scottish Parliament	9	20	4	51	84
Northern Ireland Assembly				88	88
London Assembly	8	7	1	1	17
European Parliament (UK Members)	19	8	5	16	48
Female					
House of Commons	48	86	7	6	147
House of Lords	38	63	26	53	180
National Assembly for Wales	4	15	1	4	24
Scottish Parliament	6	17	1	21	45
Northern Ireland Assembly				20	20
London Assembly	1	5	1	1	8
European Parliament (UK Members)	6	5	6	7	24
% female					
House of Commons	16%	33%	12%	19%	23%
House of Lords	18%	29%	29%	17%	22%
National Assembly for Wales	29%	50%	20%	36%	40%
Scottish Parliament	40%	46%	20%	29%	35%
Northern Ireland Assembly				19%	19%
London Assembly	11%	42%	50%	50%	32%
European Parliament (UK Members)	24%	38%	55%	30%	33%

The Dáil Éireann has 25 female and 141 male TDs (15%) and 18 of the 60 Senators are female (30%)⁶. Parallels have been drawn between the political cultures in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland which give women's representation a low priority⁷.

If placed in international perspective alongside national legislatures the Northern Ireland Assembly would rank 70th in the world⁸. In terms of devolved institutions, the following table summarises women's representation in the regional assemblies of some western European states.

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- 5 House of Commons Standard Note SN/NG/1250 Women in Parliament and Government, 13 May 2013, p.3: <http://www.parliament.uk/Templates/BriefingPapers/Pages/BPPdfDownload.aspx?bp-id=SN01250>. Note the Northern Ireland Assembly figure is 20, i.e. those elected in 2011, not the current number of 21.
- 6 For statistics for female members of legislatures on these islands, see the Centre for the Advancement of Women Observatory, Queen's University Belfast: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/cawp/observatory.html>.
- 7 Yvonne Galligan and Kathleen Knight (2011), 'Attitudes Towards Women in Politics: Gender, Generation and Party Identification in Ireland', in *Parliamentary Affairs* 64(4), 585-611.
- 8 Inter-Parliamentary Union, 'Women in National Parliaments', accessed 17 July 2013: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>. This is reproduced at Appendix 4.
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Devolved Legislatures	% Female
German Länder	32 (2011) ⁹
Spanish Comunidades Autónomas	43.8 (2013) ¹⁰
Italian Regioni	15.9% (2013) ¹¹
Belgian regional and community parliaments	36.4 (2009) ¹²
Austrian Länder	39.7 (2013) ¹³

Apart for the Italian regional legislatures, the Northern Ireland Assembly has significantly lower female representation than comparable western European legislatures.

The following figures place the Assembly in the perspective of female political representation in Northern Ireland in general¹⁴:

- 23.5% of local councillors in 2011 were women (compared with 31% in England)
- 5 of 26 mayors/chairs of councils were women
- 4 of 18 MPs are women (compared with 22% in GB)
- 2 of 3 MEPs are women (compared with 30% in GB)
- 4 of 15 ministers and junior ministers are women

The representation of women in politics in Northern Ireland has a direct association with candidate selection. An examination of the 2011 Assembly elections indicates that female candidates generally fared better than their male counterparts in terms of votes won, but the lower numbers elected were more reflective of lower numbers of candidates¹⁵.

Policy

The Beijing Platform for Action of 1995, which consists of a range of commitments by governments to address structural disadvantages experienced by women internationally, includes specific measures to increase women's participation in power and decision-making. These include¹⁶:

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

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- 9 Bundesministerium für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend (2013), Atlas zur Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern in Deutschland, Berlin: BfFSFJ, p.8: <http://www.bmfsfj.de/RedaktionBMFSFJ/Broschuerenstelle/Pdf-Anlagen/2.-Atlas-zur-Gleichstellung-in-Deutschland,property=pdf,bereich=bmfsfj,sprache=de,rwb=true.pdf>.
- 10 Instituto de la Mujer, Participación en los Parlamentos Autonómicos Según Comunidad Autónoma, accessed 18 July 2013: <http://www.inmujer.gob.es/estadisticas/decisiones/poderLegislativo/2009/parlAutoCCAA.xls>.
- 11 Derived from the websites of the 20 Regioni, accessed on 18 July 2013 via the website of Conferenza dei Presidenti delle Assemblée Legislative delle Regioni e delle Province Autonome: <http://www.parlamentiregionali.it/assemblee/consigli-consiglieri.php>.
- 12 Institut pour l'Égalité des Femmes et les Hommes (2011), Femmes et Hommes en Belgique, Brussels: IÉFH, p.96: http://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/binaries/GenderStat_F_Hfdst1-8_tcm337-160843.pdf.
- 13 Derived from Landtag websites, accessed 19 July 2013 via the Republik Österreich Parlament website: <http://www.parlament.gv.at/PERK/BOE/LT/>.
- 14 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (2012), Women in Northern Ireland 2012, Belfast: DETI, p.22: http://www.deti.gov.uk/women_in_northern_ireland_september_2012_final_version.pdf.
- 15 Yvonne Galligan (2013), 'Gender and Politics in Northern Ireland: The Representation Gap Revisited', in Irish Political Studies 28(3), 420-423.
- 16 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, pp.79-84: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>.
-

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

A full list of actions to be taken is at Appendix 5.

The Venice Commission in 2010 outlined a set of principles for the operation of democratic systems. Principle 6 states the following¹⁷:

All individuals and groups that seek to establish political parties must be able to do so on the basis of equal treatment before the law. No individual or group wishing to associate as a political party should be advantaged or disadvantaged in this endeavour by the state, and the regulation of parties must be uniformly applied. In order to eliminate historical inequalities, measures can be taken to ensure equal opportunities for women and minorities. Temporary special measures aimed at promoting de facto equality for women and ethnic, "racial" or other minorities subject to past discrimination may be enacted and should not be considered discriminatory.

The Belfast Agreement 1998 includes a commitment to 'the right of women to full and equal political participation'¹⁸.

The vision for the Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland states¹⁹:

Men and women will be able to realise their full potential to contribute equally to the political, economic, social, (including caring roles) and cultural development of Northern Ireland and benefit equally from the results.

One of the Key Action Areas of the strategy is 'representation in public life/decision-making', which is associated with the following strategic objectives²⁰:

- To achieve better collection and dissemination of data
- To achieve gender balance on all government appointed committees, boards and other relevant official bodies
- To actively promote an inclusive society
- To ensure the participation of women and men in all levels of peace building, civil society, economy and government

Key Concepts

Political representation has been defined in two senses²¹:

Descriptive representation indicates that representatives share characteristics with those they represent, i.e. women representing women.

Substantive representation indicates that representatives serve the interests of those they represent, i.e. promoting issues relevant to women.

17 Venice Commission (2011), Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, Warsaw: OSCE, p.25: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/77812>.

18 The Agreement: Agreement Reached at Multi-Party Talks, 1998, 'Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity: Human Rights': https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/136652/agreement.pdf.

19 Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (2006), Gender Equality Strategy: A strategic framework for action to promote gender equality for women and men 2006-2016, Belfast: OFMDFM, p.14: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/genderequalitystrategy2006-2016.pdf>.

20 Ibid., pp.17, 23.

21 Mercedes Mateo Diaz (2005), Representing Women? Female Legislators in West European Parliaments, Colchester: ECPR, p.14.

Presence Theory explains how organisational cultures change as numbers of people with a different approach increase. In this case, political cultures are deemed to alter as numbers of women increase and introduce different ways of working and different perspectives to men²².

Critical Mass Theory examines the proportion of people with a different approach that are required for organisations to change. In this case, the proportion of women in a legislature required to make a difference has been variously estimated at 30-40%, but there has been a shift from an emphasis on numbers to more interest in what 'critical actors' do when they become legislators²³.

3 Legislative Framework

This section reviews the current legislation in force in Northern Ireland with regard to the election of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for in the Northern Ireland Act 1998²⁴. There are no provisions for gender equality relating to elections in the Act.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002²⁵ amends the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 to exempt the selection of election candidates from the provisions of the Order²⁶. This enables political parties to use positive discrimination for the promotion of women candidates over men. This provision has been extended to 2030.

The Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill²⁷ provides for some changes in elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, but does not include legislative provisions for a gender balance, nor have there been any such proposed amendments. The Bill was awaiting Report Stage at the time of writing.

In terms of legislative competence, the following are excepted matters under Schedule 2 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998²⁸:

Elections, including the franchise, in respect of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the European Parliament and district councils

The subject-matter of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000²⁹ with the exception of Part IX (political donations etc. by companies)

This paragraph does not include the funding of political parties for the purpose of assisting members of the Northern Ireland Assembly connected with such parties to perform their Assembly duties

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- 22 Joni Lovenduski (2005), *Feminising Politics*, Cambridge: Polity, p.142.
 - 23 Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook (2008), 'Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation', in *Political Studies* 56, pp.725-736.
 - 24 Part IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 relates to elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/contents>.
 - 25 Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002, Section 2: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/2/contents>.
 - 26 Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, Article 43A: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1976/1042/contents>.
 - 27 Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/northernirelandmiscellaneousprovisions.html>.
 - 28 Paragraphs 12-13 of Schedule 2 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
 - 29 Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/41/contents>
-

The following are reserved matters under Schedule 3 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998³⁰:

Disqualification for membership of the Assembly; privileges, powers and immunities of the Assembly, its members and committees greater than those conferred by section 50³¹

4 Mechanisms

This section examines some mechanisms that have been suggested or are in place elsewhere to increase women's representation in legislatures.

The barriers to women's participation in legislatures have been summarised as follows³²:

Political Barriers

1. Masculine model of politics – political structures have been designed by and for men and as such reflect a culture and way of working more conducive to male participation
2. Lack of party support – political parties as male domains do not adequately promote the participation of women
3. Lack of co-operation with women's organisations – groups that support women in communities are potential resources for nurturing future female politicians, but these are not utilised
4. Electoral systems – the mechanisms of elections can indirectly disadvantage women

Socio-Economic Barriers

1. Feminisation of poverty and unemployment – political participation often requires a degree of financial resource
2. Dual burden – women bear the primary responsibility for caring, child-rearing and domestic chores, leaving less time for political participation
3. Education and training – in many countries, women do not have the same education opportunities as men and the contexts in which women are educated tend to stream women and girls to particular occupations

Ideological and Psychological Barriers

1. Traditional roles – politics is seen as traditionally 'male' and women and men are socialised into maintaining this perception
2. Lack of confidence – not necessarily a lack of assertiveness, but a lack of awareness of existing skill sets that are transferable to politics and a sense of exclusion
3. Perception of politics as 'dirty' – many women are deterred by political cultures
4. Role of mass media – images of politicians tend to be of males and of public life being male-oriented

30 Paragraph 8 of Schedule 3 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

31 Section 50 relates to privileged matters in the Assembly with relevance to defamation legislation.

32 Nadezhda Shvedova (2005), 'Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament', in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: IDEA, pp.33-48.

Examples of proposed mechanisms to overcome barriers to participation are set out below.

Party Policies

Political parties have a role to play in the selection of female candidates to stand for election. There are three stages of selection barriers that women have to overcome³³:

1. Self-selection – while men are socialised to see politics as a viable option, women tend not to put themselves forward.
2. Party selection – some party selection processes are women-friendly, others less so.
3. Voter selection – this is the least difficult barrier, as, generally speaking, research suggests voters opt for parties rather than personalities.

Strategies that parties can undertake to increase the number of female candidates have been suggested as follows³⁴:

All-women shortlists for certain parliamentary seats

Twinning – a woman is selected for every man selected

Clustering – party selection takes place across two or more constituencies to ensure equal female and male representation across constituencies

Zippering – women and men are alternated on party lists

Parliamentary Procedures

Rather than adapting women to the political environment, suggestions have been made as to how the political workplace can be more women-friendly. Suggestions include the following³⁵:

- Promotion of gender equality in the legislature
- Rules to provide for gender-neutral language
- Less aggressive parliamentary language and behaviour
- Family-friendly sitting hours
- Childcare facilities, parental leave and family-friendly spaces
- Gender-sensitive training programmes for all Members
- Gender mainstreaming in all work processes and outputs
- Women's caucus or cross-party group of female Members
- Regularised links with women's groups and other civil society organisations working on gender issues
- Legislative change to ensure more women gain seats in the legislature
- Increase in the number of women in leadership positions in the legislature
- Code of conduct to prohibit behaviour such as sexual harassment
- Review of the 'maleness' of the institution, such as working practices, ceremonies, artwork, etc.

33 Richard Matland (2005), 'Enhancing Women's Political Participation: Legislative Recruitment and Electoral Systems', in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: IDEA, pp.94-5.

34 From the report on the conference 'Encouraging Women into Political and Public Life', Hillsborough Castle, 13 November 2006, pp.53-4: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/women-in-political-and-public-life-conference-3.pdf>.

35 Sonia Palmieri (2011), *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments: A Global Review of Good Practice*, Geneva: Inter-Parliamentary Union, pp.107-110: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf>.

- Increase in the level of visibility of gender issues in parliamentary practice
- Gender Equality Committee, or a dedicated equality committee that deals with mainstreaming gender in the business of the legislature
- Gender mainstreaming in the business of all committees
- Enhance parliamentary research in gender issues
- Parties to have a 'women's wing' or group

One example of a flexible response to accommodate women is the Spanish Congress of Deputies, where in June 2012 Deputy Olga Iglesias was the first person to avail of distance voting due to a regulation change in July 2011, allowing for Deputies kept away from Congress due to illness or pregnancy to vote³⁶.

Quotas

Quotas for women have been proposed because progress for equal representation has been considered to be too slow and the barriers to women too great. Kinds of quotas have been described as follows³⁷:

- Candidate quotas, legal or voluntary
- Reserved seats in the legislature
- Gender-neutral quotas, such as at least 40% of either sex
- Fast-track quotas, where representation is traditionally low

In the UK, quotas are voluntary. This is provided for in legislation by the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 exempting electoral candidate selection from sex discrimination legislation (see Section 3 above).

In the Republic of Ireland, Section 42 of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012³⁸ provides for the financial punishment of political parties that do not have 30% of either sex standing as candidates in the next election, and 40% of either sex in any election after seven years from the first election, by a 50% reduction in state funding. The relevant text is reproduced at Appendix 6.

In France, the law of 6 June 2000³⁹ requires political parties to have an equal number of male and female candidates on party lists for relevant PR list elections. In this case, the list is rejected if there is not 50-50 representation. This only applies to elections to the European Parliament, half of the Senate (departments having four senators or more), regional councils and larger municipal councils (of 3,500 inhabitants or more).

For the single-member district elections to the Assemblée Nationale, this is more difficult to apply. In this case, there is a complex equation that deducts a certain amount of state subsidy to political parties relative to how far the proportion of candidates falls below 50% of either sex⁴⁰.

36 'Una diputada embarazada estrena el voto a distancia en el Congreso', El Mundo 12 June 2012: <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2012/06/12/espana/1339517558.html>.

37 Drude Dahlerup (2005), 'Increasing Women's Political Representation: New Trends in Gender Quotas' in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: IDEA, pp.141-2.

38 Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2012/en/act/pub/0036/index.html>.

39 Loi n° 2000-493 du 6 juin 2000 tendant à favoriser l'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux mandats électoraux et fonctions électives: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000400185>.

40 Mariette Sineau (2008), 'France: 'parité' under the law' in Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall (eds) *Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe*, Brussels: European Parliament, p.51: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/200903/20090310ATT51390/20090310ATT51390EN.pdf>.

Reserved seats are used in the Kosovo Assembly and in municipal elections in Kosovo. The General Election Law of 2008 requires each party list to be at least 30% male and female, and the final allocated seats to the Assembly to have the same quota⁴¹. Quotas were initially unpopular in post-conflict Kosovo, being seen as an imposition of the international community. Indeed parties claimed they had difficulty finding accomplished female politicians, filling quotas to fulfill the rule, and a number of female legislators resigned once in post in the first local elections, to be replaced by males⁴². However, following safeguards to prevent this happening again, in the spirit of international commitments to gender equality, such as UN Resolution 1325⁴³, and the gradual acceptance of quotas, the Assembly currently has 40 female Members out of 120.

Quotas are regarded as controversial, because, it is argued, they are less democratic, against equality of opportunity, implies female politicians are there for their gender alone, women politicians do not want to be in politics just because they are women and quotas create conflicts in party organisations. On the other hand, it is contended that quotas compensate for barriers to women, they ensure the few women who manage to get into politics are not alone, women have a right to equal representation, women's experiences are needed in politics, it is parties that control representation rather than voters, women are minimised in a 'male' political system and conflicts caused by quotas are only temporary⁴⁴.

It has also been argued that quotas are not sufficient for the meaningful equal representation of women, needing to be part of a suite of measures to support women in and into legislatures, and also that the incremental approach to quotas has been disappointing, necessitating a fast-track approach, that is, a higher proportion of guaranteed seats in the legislature for women through reserved seats or more stringent penalties for infringement of candidate selection quotas⁴⁵.

Electoral Systems

The way candidates are elected has a bearing on the number of women returned. Indeed, some assert that the impact of some electoral systems on female representation can be quite dramatic, with Proportional Representation (PR) systems with high district magnitudes being most effective⁴⁶.

A recent survey of 15 countries compared outcomes for a range of electoral systems:

- Single Member Simple Plurality (SMSP): United Kingdom Also known as First Past the Post (FPTP), the majoritarian nature of the system, single-member constituencies, a two-party system with a tradition of safe seats and parties' decentralised selection practices are said to disadvantage women, but the key element to the question of who gets elected is party selection⁴⁷.

41 Articles 27 and 111.6 of Law No.3/L-073 on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo: http://www.kuvendikosoves.org/common/docs/ligjet/2008_03-L073_en.pdf. These articles are reproduced at Appendix 7.

42 Milica Anti and Sonja Lokar (2006), 'The Balkans: From Total Rejection to Gradual Acceptance of Gender Quotas' in Drude Dahlerup (ed) *Women, Quotas and Politics*, London: Routledge, pp.155-6.

43 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 outlines international commitments to a gender perspective in conflict and post-conflict societies, including increased representation in all decision-making levels: http://www.un.org/events/res_1325e.pdf.

44 Drude Dahlerup (1999), 'Using Quotas to Increase Women's Political Representation' in Azza Karam (ed) *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: International IDEA, p.94.

45 Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall (2005), 'Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Representation for Women: Why Scandinavia is no Longer the Model' in *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7(1), pp.26-48.

46 Richard Matland (1999), in Azza Karam (ed) *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: International IDEA, pp.75, 80.

47 Sarah Childs, Rosie Campbell and Joni Lovenduski (2012), 'The "Mother of All Parliaments": Westminster's Male Face', in Manon Tremblay (ed), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Sex Quotas*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.47, 50.

- **Two-Round Single Member District (SMD): France** Despite the so-called 'parity laws' that introduced quotas (see above), the local vote focus on the most visible candidate, the practice of multiple office-holding (double-jobbing) and the need for 12.5% of the vote for the second round run-off are said to be barriers to women. However, it is also noted that women are rarely selected for safe seats⁴⁸.
- **Closed Lists: Spain** Since 2004, Spain has consistently returned 36% women to the national parliament. This 'feminisation' of the current parliament has been attributed to the PR electoral system, more egalitarian views on gender roles in society and greater labour market and higher education representation of women. However, the main causal factor is said to be the implementation of gender quotas in left-wing political parties⁴⁹.
- **Preferential (Open) Lists: Belgium** Voters can cast multiple preferential votes for candidates and vote for a party, there being equal weight for personal and party list votes in a PR system. A quota law requires an equal number of men and women on a party list or it is rejected, but position on the list is important. Quotas are said to only be effective in a small number of districts, but factors against women include financial resources available to women to pursue a political career and the sexual division of labour in the home⁵⁰.
- **Single Transferable Vote (STV): Republic of Ireland** STV facilitates voters' wishes to a high degree, but fewer women are elected, primarily attributed to party selection and women standing in districts of lower magnitude, districts of six seats or more deemed more favourable to the election of women candidates⁵¹. It remains to be seen what effect the new quota law will have on representation (see above).
- **Mixed Member Proportional (MMP): New Zealand** There has been a dramatic increase in female representation in New Zealand since the electoral system was changed from First Past The Post (FPTP) to MMP in the 1990's. Voters have two votes: one for an individual candidate in a single-seat member district and one for a closed party list, with the Sainte Laguë system used to allocate seats. However, more women tend to be on the party list than stand as electoral candidates⁵².

In summary, voting systems can have a major effect on the representation of women, but the role of parties and the use of quotas have to be taken into account. While PR systems are in general considered to be more conducive to women's representation, there are significant counter-examples: PR systems in Hungary and Japan return fewer women than majoritarian systems in the UK and USA; more women were returned in Scotland and Wales under the majoritarian tier than the PR tier; and the brief introduction of PR in France in the 1980s did not affect female representation⁵³. A combination of factors rather than electoral systems alone explains the increased representation of women.

48 Mariette Sineau (2012), 'The Single-Member District System: The Hidden Bonus for Notables', in Manon Tremblay (ed), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Sex Quotas*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.93-95.

49 Celia Valiente (2012), 'Women in Parliament: The Effectiveness of Quotas' in Manon Tremblay (ed), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Sex Quotas*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, p.129.

50 Petra Meir (2012), 'The Collateral Damage of Electoral System Design', in Manon Tremblay (ed), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Sex Quotas*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.144-153.

51 Yvonne Galligan (2012), 'STV: A gender-Proportional System?', in Manon Tremblay (ed), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Sex Quotas*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.158-9.

52 Jennifer Curtin (2012), 'Gendering Parliamentary Representation: A Mixed System Producing Mixed Results' in Manon Tremblay (ed), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Sex Quotas*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.198-9, 206.

53 Manon Tremblay (2012), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Sex Quotas*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.240-1.

Support Mechanisms

Strategies to increase the political participation of women are said to be on three levels⁵⁴:

1. Equality rhetoric – public acceptance of women's claims for political equality
2. Equality promotion – mechanisms such as training for would-be female candidates, financial support, targets for female representation, etc.
3. Equality guarantees (positive discrimination) – such as quotas (discussed above)

The most prevalent strategies for increasing participation have been candidate training by political parties and women's organisations and voluntary party quotas, quota laws being less widespread. Additional support to women, apart from government measures to persuade or force parties to field more female candidates and electoral system structuring of the political landscape discussed above, can comprise the following⁵⁵:

- Women's organisations mobilising women to stand – this increases the pool of potential candidates and raises awareness among women in the community of the potential for political participation
- Dedicated campaign funds for women – to provide financial resources for women candidates to raise their profile and campaign effectively

Certainly, the literature suggests that a combination of measures is required to increase representation, addressing demand through changing political cultures and attitudes towards women and the introduction of structures more conducive to women's participation, and supply side measures, such as encouraging more women into politics and introducing training and support initiatives to sustain women in political life.

In broad terms, a paper prepared for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) proposes a six-step action plan for gender equality in elected office. These comprise constitutional rights to guarantee the participation of women, an electoral system that is conducive to women's representation, legal quotas, party rules and procedures to encourage and support women candidates, capacity development to support women and parliamentary reform to create an environment more accepting of women⁵⁶. This action plan is reproduced below.

54 Joni Lovenduski (2005), *Feminising Politics*, Cambridge: Polity, pp.90-1.

55 Yvonne Galligan and Manon Tremblay (2005), *Sharing Power: Women, Parliament, Democracy*, Aldershot: Ashgate, pp.235-6.

56 Pippa Norris and Mona Lena Krook (2011), *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, Warsaw: OSCE, p.7: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/78432>.



Constitutional rights

Guarantee equal rights for women and men, including rights to the voting suffrage and to candidate nomination



Electoral system

Reform the type of electoral system; proportional representation with large district magnitudes maximizes opportunities for women



Legal quotas

Review laws regulating candidate recruitment processes for all parties; the use of reserved seats for women members or gender quotas for candidates generally expand women's representation



Party rules and recruitment procedures

Review internal candidate recruitment processes within each party; adopt fast track strategies in party rulebooks and regulations to achieve gender equality for nominated candidates



Capacity development

Strengthen the skills and resources of women in the pipeline for elected office, with initiatives by parties, the media and NGOs, including knowledge networks, mentoring programs, skills training and funding for women candidates



Parliamentary reform

Reform the rules and internal procedures within parliament, including the facilities and working conditions, hours of sitting, principles for leadership recruitment, and provision of childcare facilities

Appendix 1: Female Members of the Legislative Assembly⁵⁷

Member	Party	Constituency	Minister	Committees	All-Party Groups
Judith Cochrane	Alliance	East Belfast Elected May 2011		Social Development 2011-present Finance and Personnel 2011-present Assembly Commission 2011-present	UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security 2011-2012 Cancer 2011-present Rugby 2011-present Mental Health 2012-present SMEs (Chair) 2013-present Infertility 2013-present
Arlene Foster	DUP	Fermanagh and South Tyrone Elected November 2003	Environment 2007-8 DETI 2008-present Acting First Minister 2010		
Bronwyn McGahan	Sinn Féin	Fermanagh and South Tyrone Replaced Michelle Gildernew 2012		Ad Hoc Committee, Conformity with Equality, Welfare Reform Bill, 2012-13 OFMdfM 2012-present Employment and Learning 2012-present	UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security 2012-present
Maeve McLaughlin	Sinn Féin	Foyle Replaced Martina Anderson 2012		HSSPS 2012-present ETI 2012-present	
Brenda Hale	DUP	Lagan Valley Elected 2011		CAL 2011-12 Education 2011-present OFMdfM 2012-present	Cancer 2011-present Human Trafficking 2012-present

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Information correct as at recess, July 2013.

Member	Party	Constituency	Minister	Committees	All-Party Groups
Michelle O'Neill	Sinn Féin	Mid Ulster Elected 2007	DARD 2011-present	Education 2007-11 HSSPS 2007-11	Autism 2008-11 Disability 2008-11 (Chair) Visual Impairment 2009-12 Learning Disability 2009-11 Cancer 2009-11 (Chair 2009-10) Sexual Health 2009-11 UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security 2011 Mental Health 2012-present
Sandra Overend	UUP	Mid Ulster Elected 2011		OFMdfM 2011 Employment and Learning 2011-12 AERC 2011-12 Standards and Privileges 2011-present ETI 2012-present Business 2012-present	Children and Young People 2011-present Science and Technology 2012-present SMEs 2013-present Cycling 2013-present Congenital Heart Disease 2013-present
Megan Fearon	Sinn Féin	Newry and Armagh Replaced Conor Murphy 2012		OFMdfM 2012-present Finance and Personnel 2012-present	UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security 2012-present Motor Insurance 2013-present
Paula Bradley	DUP	North Belfast Elected 2011		Environment 2011-12 Standards and Privileges 2011-12, 2013-present Ad Hoc Committee, Conformity with Equality, Welfare Reform Bill, 2012-13 HSSPS 2011-present Social Development 2012-present	Sexual Health 2011-present (Chair 2013-present) UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security 2011-present (Chair) Heart Disease & Stroke 2012-present Mental Health 2012-present Infertility 2013-present (Chair)

Member	Party	Constituency	Minister	Committees	All-Party Groups
Carál Ní Chuilín	Sinn Féin	North Belfast Elected 2007	DCAL 2011-present	Business 2007-11 AERC 2007-8 HSSPS 2007-8 Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Criminal Justice Order 2007-11 Social Development 2008-11 Ad Hoc Committee on the Private Security Industry Order 2009-11 Justice 2010-11 Business 2011	Children and Young People 2007-9, 2011-present Disability 2008-11 Cancer 2008-9 (Chair) Community and Voluntary Sector 2009-10 Organ Donation 2013-present
Pam Brown	DUP	South Antrim Elected 2011		Social Development 2011-present HSSPS 2011-present	Cancer 2011-present Muscular Dystrophy 2011-present Human Trafficking 2012-present Heart Disease and Stroke 2012-present Organ Donation 2013-present Postal Issues 2013-present Infertility 2013-present
Anna Lo	Alliance	South Belfast Elected 2007		Social Development 2007-10 Employment and Learning 2007-11 Audit 2010, 2011-present Regional Development 2010-11 Environment 2011-present (Chair)	International Development 2007-present Ethnic Minority Communities 2008-present (Chair 2010-11) Sexual Health 2010-present (Chair 2011-13) Co-operatives and Mutuals 2010-11 UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security 2011-present

Member	Party	Constituency	Minister	Committees	All-Party Groups
					Human Trafficking 2012-present (Chair 2012-13) Community and Voluntary Sector 2011-present European Environmental Regulations, Directives and Decisions 2011-present Infertility 2013-present
Karen McKevitt	SDLP	South Down Elected 2011		CAL 2011-present Business 2011-present	International Development 2011-present Autism 2011-present Muscular Dystrophy 2011-present
Catriona Ruane	Sinn Féin	South Down Elected 2003	Education 2007-11	OFMdFM 2011- 12 Finance and Personnel 2011 Ad Hoc Committee, Conformity with Equality, Welfare Reform Bill, 2012-13 Business 2012-present AERC 2012-present Assembly Commission 2013-present	UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security 2011-12

Member	Party	Constituency	Minister	Committees	All-Party Groups
Michelle McIlveen	DUP	Strangford Elected 2007		Education 2007-present Social Development 2007-9 Regional Development 2009-11 CAL 2009-10, 2011-present (Chair)	Children and Young People 2007-present (Chair 2011-present) Funerals and Bereavement 2008-present Voluntary and Community Sector 2010-present Rugby 2011-present Human Trafficking 2012-present Football 2012-present
Jo-Anne Dobson	UUP	Upper Bann Elected 2011		Education 2011-present ARD 2011-present	Diabetes 2011-present Disability 2011-present Sexual Health 2011-present Heart Disease and Stroke 2012-present Learning Disability 2012-present Organ Donation 2013-present (Chair) Congenital Heart Disease 2013-present Infertility 2013-present

Member	Party	Constituency	Minister	Committees	All-Party Groups
Dolores Kelly	SDLP	Upper Bann Elected 2003		OFMdfM 2007-11 Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2007-11 HSSPS 2009-10 Environment 2009-10 (Chair), 2012-present Employment and Learning 2010-11 (Chair) Justice 2010 ARD 2011-12 Regional Development 2011-present	Ethnic Minority Communities 2008-11 Rural Sustainability 2008-11 Visual Impairment 2009-present UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security 2011-12 Congenital Heart Disease 2013-present
Jennifer McCann	Sinn Féin	West Belfast Elected 2007	OFMdfM 2012-present	Finance and Personnel 2007-11 (Chair 2009-11) ETI 2007-11, 2012 Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2007-11 Justice 2011-12 Public Accounts 2011-12	Ethnic Minority Communities 2008-10 (Chair 2009-10) Energy 2008-11 Voluntary and Community Sector 2009-11 C-operatives and Mutuals 2010-11 UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security 2011-12 Human Trafficking 2012-present International Development 2012-present
Sue Ramsey	Sinn Féin	West Belfast Elected 1998 Replaced Bairbre de Brún 2004 Elected 2007		HSSPS 1999-2003, 2007-11, 2012-present (Chair) Public Accounts 1999-2002 Financial Investigations (NI) Order 2000-1 Proceeds of Crime Bill 2001	Children and Young People 2007-present Disability 2008-11 Sexual Health 2010-11, 2012-present Co-operatives and Mutuals 2011-present

Member	Party	Constituency	Minister	Committees	All-Party Groups
				Business 2002-3 Employment and Learning 2007-11 (Chair 2007-10) Ad Hoc Committee on the draft Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2007-11 Procedures 2011-12 (Chair) ETI 2011-12	Mental Health 2012-present (Chair) Organ Donation 2013-present Congenital Heart Disease 2013-present Infertility 2013-present
Rosaleen McCorley	Sinn Féin	West Belfast Replaced Paul Maskey 2012		Justice 2012-present CAL 2012-present	Infertility 2013-present
Michaela Boyle	Sinn Féin	West Tyrone Elected 2011		HSSPS 2011-12 ARD 2012 Education 2011-present Public Accounts 2012-present Audit 2012-present	Autism 2011-12 Sexual Health 2011 Disability 2011-present Mental Health 2012-present Visual Impairment 2012-present

Appendix 2:

Female Candidates in the 2011 Assembly Election

Constituency	Name	Party	1st Preference Votes	Result
Belfast East 13 men 4 women	Judith Cochrane	Alliance	4329	Elected
	Ann Cooper	BNP	337	Eliminated count 6
	Dawn Purvis	Independent	1702	Eliminated count 11
	Magdalena Wolska	SDLP	250	Eliminated count 6
Belfast North 9 men 2 women	Paula Bradley	DUP	3488	Elected
	Carál Ní Chuilín	Sinn Féin	2999	Elected
Belfast South 11 men 3 women	Clare Bailey	Green	889	Eliminated count 5
	Anna Lo	Alliance	6390	Elected
	Ruth Patterson	DUP	3800	Eliminated count 5
Belfast West 12 men 2 women	Jennifer McCann	Sinn Féin	5239	Elected
	Sue Ramsey	Sinn Féin	4116	Elected
East Antrim 11 men 2 women	Geraldine Mulvenna	Alliance	1620	Eliminated count 9
	Ruth Wilson	TUV	1346	Eliminated count 5
East Londonderry 10 men 2 women	Bernadette Archibald	Sinn Féin	2639	Eliminated count 7
	Lesley Mcauley	UUP	1472	Eliminated count 3
Fermanagh and South Tyrone 8 men 3 women	Arlene Foster	DUP	6876	Elected
	Michelle Gildernew	Sinn Féin	9110	Elected
	Hannah Su	Alliance	845	Eliminated count 3
Foyle 11 men 1 woman	Martina Anderson	Sinn Féin	6950	Elected
Lagan Valley 9 men 2 women	Brenda Hale	DUP	2910	Elected
	Mary-Kate Quinn	Sinn Féin	1203	Eliminated count 6
Mid Ulster 11 men 2 women	Michelle O'Neill	Sinn Féin	5178	Elected
	Sandra Overend	UUP	4409	Elected
North Antrim 8 men 3 women	Jayne Dunlop	Alliance	1848	Eliminated count 5
	Audrey Patterson	TUV	668	Eliminated count 3
	Evelyne Robinson	DUP	3256	Eliminated count 8

Constituency	Name	Party	1st Preference Votes	Result
North Down 12 men 1 woman	Anne Wilson	Alliance	2100	Eliminated count 11
South Antrim 9 men 1 woman	Pam Lewis	DUP	2866	Elected
South Down 7 men 4 women	Naomi Bailie	Sinn Féin	3050	Eliminated count 7
	Karen McKeivitt	SDLP	3758	Elected
	Margaret Ritchie	SDLP	8506	Elected
	Caitríona Ruane	Sinn Féin	5955	Elected
Strangford 10 men 1 woman	Michelle McIlveen	DUP	4573	Elected
Upper Bann 8 men 4 women	Jo-Anne Dobson	UUP	3348	Elected
	Dolores Kelly	SDLP	4846	Elected
	Sheila McDaid	Alliance	786	Eliminated count 4
	Barbara Trotter	UKIP	272	Eliminated count 3
West Tyrone 10 men 1 woman	Michaela Boyle	Sinn Féin	5053	Elected

Appendix 3: Female Members of the Assembly: Historic by Constituency

Constituency	Female Members
East Antrim	None
East Belfast	Judith Cochrane, Alliance, 2011-present Naomi Long, Alliance, 2003-10 Dawn Purvis, PUP 2007-10, Independent 2010-11
East Londonderry	Pauline Armitage, UUP, 1998-2003
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	Joan Carson, UUP, 1998-2003 Arlene Foster, DUP, 2003-present (Minister 2007-present) Michelle Gildernew, SF, 1998-2012 (Minister 2007-11) Bronwyn McGahan, SF, 2012-present
Foyle	Martina Anderson, SF, 2007-12 (Minister 2011-12) Mary Bradley, SDLP, 2003-11 Annie Courtney, SDLP 2000-3, Independent 2003 Maeve McLaughlin, SF, 2012-present Mary Nelis, SF, 1998-2003
Lagan Valley	Norah Beare, UUP, 2003-7 Marietta Farrell, SDLP, 2007 Brenda Hale, DUP, 2011-present Patricia Lewsley, SDLP, 1998-2006
Mid Ulster	Geraldine Dougan, SF, 2003-7 Michelle O'Neill, SF, 2007-present (Minister 2011-present) Sandra Overend, UUP, 2011-present
Newry and Armagh	Megan Fearon, SF, 2012-present Pat O'Rawe, SF, 2003-7
North Antrim	None
North Belfast	Paula Bradley, DUP, 2011-present Carál Ní Chuilín, SF, 2007-present (Minister 2011-present) Kathy Stanton, SF, 2003-7
North Down	Eileen Bell, Alliance, 1998-2007 (Speaker 2006-7) Jane Morrice, NIWC, 1998-2003 (Deputy Speaker 2000-3)
South Antrim	Pam Brown, DUP, 2011-present
South Belfast	Carmel Hanna, SDLP, 1998-2010 (Minister 2001-2) Anna Lo, Alliance, 2007-present Monica McWilliams, NIWC, 1998-2003
South Down	Karen McKevitt, SDLP, 2011-present Margaret Ritchie, SDLP, 2003-12 (Minister 2007-10) Caitríona Ruane, SF, 2003-present (Minister 2007-11)
Strangford	Michelle McIlveen, DUP, 2007-present Iris Robinson, DUP, 1998-2010

Constituency	Female Members
Upper Bann	Jo-Anne Dobson, UUP, 2011-present Dolores Kelly, SDLP, 2003-present Dara O'Hagan, SF, 1998-2003 Brid Rodgers, SDLP, 1998-2003 (Minister 1999-2002)
West Belfast	Bairbre de Brún, SF, 1998-2004 (Minister 1999-2002) Diane Dodds, DUP, 2003-7 Jennifer McCann, SF, 2007-present (Minister 2012-present) Rosaleen McCorley, SF, 2012-present Sue Ramsey, SF, 1998-present
West Tyrone	Michaela Boyle, SF, 2011-present Claire McGill, SF, 2007-11

Appendix 4: Gender Representation in National Legislatures⁵⁸

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
1	Rwanda	9 2008	80	45	56.3%	9 2011	26	10	38.5%
2	Andorra	4 2011	28	14	50.0%	—	—	—	—
3	Cuba	2 2013	612	299	48.9%	—	—	—	—
4	Sweden	9 2010	349	156	44.7%	—	—	—	—
5	Seychelles	9 2011	32	14	43.8%	—	—	—	—
6	Senegal	7 2012	150	64	42.7%	—	—	—	—
7	Finland	4 2011	200	85	42.5%	—	—	—	—
8	South Africa 1	4 2009	400	169	42.3%	4 2009	53	17	32.1%
9	Nicaragua	11 2011	92	37	40.2%	—	—	—	—
10	Iceland	4 2013	63	25	39.7%	—	—	—	—
11	Norway	9 2009	169	67	39.6%	—	—	—	—
12	Mozambique	10 2009	250	98	39.2%	—	—	—	—
13	Denmark	9 2011	179	70	39.1%	—	—	—	—
14	Ecuador	2 2013	137	53	38.7%	—	—	—	—
“	Netherlands	9 2012	150	58	38.7%	5 2011	75	27	36.0%
15	Costa Rica	2 2010	57	22	38.6%	—	—	—	—
16	Timor-Leste	7 2012	65	25	38.5%	—	—	—	—
17	Belgium	6 2010	150	57	38.0%	6 2010	71	29	40.8%
18	Argentina	10 2011	257	96	37.4%	10 2011	72	28	38.9%
19	Mexico	7 2012	500	184	36.8%	7 2012	128	42	32.8%
20	Spain	11 2011	350	126	36.0%	11 2011	266	91	34.2%
“	United Republic of Tanzania	10 2010	350	126	36.0%	—	—	—	—
21	Uganda	2 2011	386	135	35.0%	—	—	—	—
22	Angola	8 2012	220	75	34.1%	—	—	—	—
“	The F.Y.R. of Macedonia	6 2011	123	42	34.1%	—	—	—	—
23	Grenada	2 2013	15	5	33.3%	3 2013	13	2	15.4%
24	Nepal	4 2008	594	197	33.2%	—	—	—	—
“	Serbia	5 2012	250	83	33.2%	—	—	—	—
25	Germany	9 2009	620	204	32.9%	N.A.	69	19	27.5%
26	New Zealand	11 2011	121	39	32.2%	—	—	—	—

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
“	Slovenia	12 2011	90	29	32.2%	11 2012	40	3	7.5%
27	Algeria	5 2012	462	146	31.6%	12 2012	142	10	7.0%
28	Italy	2 2013	630	198	31.4%	2 2013	317	92	29.0%
29	Guyana	11 2011	67	21	31.3%	—	—	—	—
30	Burundi	7 2010	105	32	30.5%	7 2010	41	19	46.3%
31	Switzerland	10 2011	200	58	29.0%	10 2011	46	9	19.6%
32	Portugal	6 2011	230	66	28.7%	—	—	—	—
33	Trinidad and Tobago	5 2010	42	12	28.6%	6 2010	31	7	22.6%
34	Austria	9 2008	183	51	27.9%	N.A.	61	19	31.1%
35	Ethiopia	5 2010	547	152	27.8%	5 2010	135	22	16.3%
36	Afghanistan	9 2010	249	69	27.7%	1 2011	102	28	27.5%
37	France	6 2012	577	155	26.9%	9 2011	347	77	22.2%
38	Lesotho	5 2012	120	32	26.7%	6 2012	33	9	27.3%
“	Tunisia	10 2011	217	58	26.7%	—	—	—	—
39	Belarus	9 2012	109	29	26.6%	8 2012	57	20	35.1%
40	South Sudan	8 2011	332	88	26.5%	8 2011	50	5	10.0%
41	El Salvador	3 2012	84	22	26.2%	—	—	—	—
42	Bolivia	12 2009	130	33	25.4%	12 2009	36	17	47.2%
43	Iraq	3 2010	325	82	25.2%	—	—	—	—
44	Lao People's Democratic Republic	4 2011	132	33	25.0%	—	—	—	—
45	Australia	8 2010	150	37	24.7%	8 2010	76	29	38.2%
“	Canada	5 2011	308	76	24.7%	N.A.	103	39	37.9%
46	Bulgaria	5 2013	240	59	24.6%	—	—	—	—
“	Sudan	4 2010	354	87	24.6%	5 2010	28	5	17.9%
47	Namibia	11 2009	78	19	24.4%	11 2010	26	7	26.9%
“	Viet Nam	5 2011	500	122	24.4%	—	—	—	—
48	Kazakhstan	1 2012	107	26	24.3%	8 2011	47	2	4.3%
49	Singapore	5 2011	99	24	24.2%	—	—	—	—
50	Lithuania	10 2012	141	34	24.1%	—	—	—	—
51	Croatia	12 2011	151	36	23.8%	—	—	—	—
52	Poland	10 2011	460	109	23.7%	10 2011	100	13	13.0%
53	China	3 2013	2987	699	23.4%	—	—	—	—
54	Kyrgyzstan	10 2010	120	28	23.3%	—	—	—	—

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
55	Latvia	9 2011	100	23	23.0%	—	—	—	—
56	United Kingdom	5 2010	650	146	22.5%	N.A.	760	172	22.6%
57	Malawi	5 2009	193	43	22.3%	—	—	—	—
58	Mauritania	11 2006	95	21	22.1%	11 2009	56	8	14.3%
59	Czech Republic	5 2010	200	44	22.0%	10 2012	81	14	17.3%
“	Equatorial Guinea	5 2013	100	22	22.0%	—	—	—	—
“	Eritrea	2 1994	150	33	22.0%	—	—	—	—
“	Uzbekistan	12 2009	150	33	22.0%	1 2010	100	15	15.0%
60	Israel	1 2013	120	26	21.7%	—	—	—	—
“	Luxembourg	6 2009	60	13	21.7%	—	—	—	—
61	Peru	4 2011	130	28	21.5%	—	—	—	—
62	Bosnia and Herzegovina	10 2010	42	9	21.4%	6 2011	15	2	13.3%
63	Greece	6 2012	300	63	21.0%	—	—	—	—
64	Cape Verde	2 2011	72	15	20.8%	—	—	—	—
“	Dominican Republic	5 2010	183	38	20.8%	5 2010	32	3	9.4%
“	Estonia	3 2011	101	21	20.8%	—	—	—	—
“	Monaco	2 2013	24	5	20.8%	—	—	—	—
65	Cambodia	7 2008	123	25	20.3%	1 2012	61	9	14.8%
66	Liechtenstein	2 2013	25	5	20.0%	—	—	—	—
67	Saudi Arabia	1 2013	151	30	19.9%	—	—	—	—
68	Republic of Moldova	11 2010	101	20	19.8%	—	—	—	—
69	Bangladesh	12 2008	350	69	19.7%	—	—	—	—
70	Honduras	11 2009	128	25	19.5%	—	—	—	—
“	Pakistan	5 2013	334	65	19.5%	3 2012	104	17	16.3%
71	Tajikistan	2 2010	63	12	19.0%	3 2010	34	5	14.7%
72	Mauritius	5 2010	69	13	18.8%	—	—	—	—
73	Slovakia	3 2012	150	28	18.7%	—	—	—	—
74	Indonesia	4 2009	560	104	18.6%	—	—	—	—
“	Kenya	3 2013	350	65	18.6%	3 2013	68	18	26.5%
75	San Marino	11 2012	60	11	18.3%	—	—	—	—
76	Sao Tome and Principe	8 2010	55	10	18.2%	—	—	—	—

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
77	United States of America	11 2012	434	77	17.7%	11 2012	100	20	20.0%
78	Madagascar	10 2010	366	64	17.5%	10 2010	164	20	12.2%
“	Paraguay	4 2013	80	14	17.5%	4 2013	45	9	20.0%
“	United Arab Emirates	9 2011	40	7	17.5%	—	—	—	—
79	Montenegro	10 2012	81	14	17.3%	—	—	—	—
80	Morocco	11 2011	395	67	17.0%	10 2009	270	6	2.2%
“	Venezuela	9 2010	165	28	17.0%	—	—	—	—
81	Turkmenistan	12 2008	125	21	16.8%	—	—	—	—
82	Barbados	2 2013	30	5	16.7%	3 2013	21	6	28.6%
“	Saint Lucia	11 2011	18	3	16.7%	1 2012	11	2	18.2%
83	Libya	7 2012	200	33	16.5%	—	—	—	—
84	Azerbaijan	11 2010	125	20	16.0%	—	—	—	—
85	Gabon	12 2011	114	18	15.8%	1 2009	102	18	17.6%
“	Thailand	7 2011	500	79	15.8%	4 2011	149	23	15.4%
86	Burkina Faso	12 2012	127	20	15.7%	—	—	—	—
“	Republic of Korea	4 2012	300	47	15.7%	—	—	—	—
87	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	3 2009	687	107	15.6%	—	—	—	—
88	Ireland	2 2011	166	25	15.1%	4 2011	60	18	30.0%
89	Zimbabwe	3 2008	214	32	15.0%	3 2008	99	24	24.2%
90	Chad	2 2011	188	28	14.9%	—	—	—	—
“	Mongolia	6 2012	74	11	14.9%	—	—	—	—
91	Malta	3 2013	70	10	14.3%	—	—	—	—
92	Chile	12 2009	120	17	14.2%	12 2009	38	5	13.2%
“	Turkey	6 2011	550	78	14.2%	—	—	—	—
93	Guinea-Bissau	11 2008	100	14	14.0%	—	—	—	—
94	Cameroon	7 2007	180	25	13.9%	4 2013	100	20	20.0%
95	Somalia	8 2012	275	38	13.8%	—	—	—	—
96	Russian Federation	12 2011	450	61	13.6%	N.A.	163	13	8.0%
“	Swaziland	9 2008	66	9	13.6%	10 2008	30	12	40.0%
97	Guatemala	9 2011	158	21	13.3%	—	—	—	—

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
“	Niger	1 2011	113	15	13.3%	—	—	—	—
“	Romania	12 2012	412	55	13.3%	12 2012	176	13	7.4%
98	Bahamas	5 2012	38	5	13.2%	5 2012	16	4	25.0%
99	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	12 2010	23	3	13.0%	—	—	—	—
100	Djibouti	2 2013	55	7	12.7%	—	—	—	—
“	Jamaica	12 2011	63	8	12.7%	9 2007	21	5	23.8%
101	Dominica	12 2009	32	4	12.5%	—	—	—	—
102	Sierra Leone	11 2012	121	15	12.4%	—	—	—	—
103	Jordan	1 2013	148	18	12.2%	10 2011	60	7	11.7%
104	Colombia	3 2010	165	20	12.1%	3 2010	100	16	16.0%
“	Uruguay	10 2009	99	12	12.1%	10 2009	31	4	12.9%
105	Georgia	10 2012	150	18	12.0%	—	—	—	—
“	Syrian Arab Republic	5 2012	250	30	12.0%	—	—	—	—
106	Suriname	5 2010	51	6	11.8%	—	—	—	—
107	Zambia	9 2011	157	18	11.5%	—	—	—	—
108	Togo	10 2007	81	9	11.1%	—	—	—	—
109	India	4 2009	545	60	11.0%	1 2012	245	26	10.6%
“	Liberia	10 2011	73	8	11.0%	10 2011	30	4	13.3%
110	Ghana	12 2012	275	30	10.9%	—	—	—	—
111	Armenia	5 2012	131	14	10.7%	—	—	—	—
“	Cyprus	5 2011	56	6	10.7%	—	—	—	—
112	Antigua and Barbuda	3 2009	19	2	10.5%	4 2009	17	5	29.4%
113	Cote d'Ivoire	12 2011	249	26	10.4%	—	—	—	—
“	Malaysia	5 2013	222	23	10.4%	N.A.	51	15	29.4%
114	Mali	7 2007	147	15	10.2%	—	—	—	—
115	Bahrain	10 2010	40	4	10.0%	11 2010	40	11	27.5%
116	Ukraine	10 2012	445	42	9.4%	—	—	—	—
117	Democratic Republic of the Congo	11 2011	492	44	8.9%	1 2007	108	6	5.6%
118	Hungary	4 2010	386	34	8.8%	—	—	—	—
119	Kiribati	10 2011	46	4	8.7%	—	—	—	—
120	Brazil	10 2010	513	44	8.6%	10 2010	81	13	16.0%

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
121	Bhutan	3 2008	47	4	8.5%	4 2013	25	2	8.0%
“	Panama	5 2009	71	6	8.5%	—	—	—	—
122	Benin	4 2011	83	7	8.4%	—	—	—	—
123	Japan	12 2012	480	39	8.1%	7 2010	237	44	18.6%
124	Botswana	10 2009	63	5	7.9%	—	—	—	—
125	Gambia	3 2012	53	4	7.5%	—	—	—	—
126	Congo	7 2012	136	10	7.4%	10 2011	72	10	13.9%
127	Nigeria	4 2011	360	24	6.7%	4 2011	109	7	6.4%
“	Saint Kitts and Nevis	1 2010	15	1	6.7%	—	—	—	—
“	Tuvalu	9 2010	15	1	6.7%	—	—	—	—
128	Maldives	5 2009	77	5	6.5%	—	—	—	—
129	Kuwait	12 2012	65	4	6.2%	—	—	—	—
130	Myanmar	11 2010	431	26	6.0%	11 2010	224	4	1.8%
131	Sri Lanka	4 2010	225	13	5.8%	—	—	—	—
132	Nauru	6 2013	19	1	5.3%	—	—	—	—
133	Haiti	11 2010	95	4	4.2%	11 2010	20	0	0.0%
134	Samoa	3 2011	49	2	4.1%	—	—	—	—
135	Tonga	11 2010	28	1	3.6%	—	—	—	—
136	Belize	3 2012	32	1	3.1%	3 2012	13	5	38.5%
“	Iran (Islamic Republic of)	5 2012	290	9	3.1%	—	—	—	—
“	Lebanon	6 2009	128	4	3.1%	—	—	—	—
137	Comoros	12 2009	33	1	3.0%	—	—	—	—
“	Marshall Islands	11 2011	33	1	3.0%	—	—	—	—
138	Papua New Guinea	6 2012	111	3	2.7%	—	—	—	—
139	Egypt	11 2011	508	10	2.0%	1 2012	270	12	4.4%
“	Solomon Islands	8 2010	50	1	2.0%	—	—	—	—
140	Oman	10 2011	84	1	1.2%	10 2011	83	15	18.1%
141	Yemen	4 2003	301	1	0.3%	4 2001	111	2	1.8%
142	Micronesia (Federated States of)	3 2013	14	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—
“	Palau	11 2012	16	0	0.0%	11 2012	13	3	23.1%
“	Qatar	7 2010	35	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—

Rank	Country	Lower or single House				Upper House or Senate			
		Elections	Seats*	Women	% W	Elections	Seats*	Women	% W
“	Vanuatu	10 2012	52	0	0.0%	—	—	—	—
?	Albania	6 2013	140	?	?	—	—	—	—
?	Philippines	5 2013	291	?	?	5 2013	24	6	25.0%

Appendix 5: Beijing Platform for Action: Measures to Increase Women's Access to Decision-Making and Political Power

Strategic Objective G.1: Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.

190. By Governments:

- (a) Commit themselves to establishing the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees, as well as in public administrative entities, and in the judiciary, including, inter alia, setting specific targets and implementing measures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieving equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, in all governmental and public administration positions;
- (b) Take measures, including, where appropriate, in electoral systems that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions in the same proportion and at the same levels as men;
- (c) Protect and promote the equal rights of women and men to engage in political activities and to freedom of association, including membership in political parties and trade unions;
- (d) Review the differential impact of electoral systems on the political representation of women in elected bodies and consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of those systems;
- (e) Monitor and evaluate progress in the representation of women through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data on women and men at all levels in various decision-making positions in the public and private sectors, and disseminate data on the number of women and men employed at various levels in Governments on a yearly basis; ensure that women and men have equal access to the full range of public appointments and set up mechanisms within governmental structures for monitoring progress in this field;
- (f) Support non-governmental organizations and research institutes that conduct studies on women's participation in and impact on decision-making and the decision-making environment;
- (g) Encourage greater involvement of indigenous women in decision-making at all levels;
- (h) Encourage and, where appropriate, ensure that government-funded organizations adopt non-discriminatory policies and practices in order to increase the number and raise the position of women in their organizations;
- (i) Recognize that shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men promote women's increased participation in public life, and take appropriate measures to achieve this, including measures to reconcile family and professional life;
- (j) Aim at gender balance in the lists of national candidates nominated for election or appointment to United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other autonomous organizations of the United Nations system, particularly for posts at the senior level.

191. By political parties:

- (a) Consider examining party structures and procedures to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women;

- (b) Consider developing initiatives that allow women to participate fully in all internal policy-making structures and appointive and electoral nominating processes;
- (c) Consider incorporating gender issues in their political agenda, taking measures to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men.

192. By Governments, national bodies, the private sector, political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations, research and academic institutions, subregional and regional bodies and non-governmental and international organizations:

- (a) Take positive action to build a critical mass of women leaders, executives and managers in strategic decision-making positions;
- (b) Create or strengthen, as appropriate, mechanisms to monitor women's access to senior levels of decision-making;
- (c) Review the criteria for recruitment and appointment to advisory and decision-making bodies and promotion to senior positions to ensure that such criteria are relevant and do not discriminate against women;
- (d) Encourage efforts by non-governmental organizations, trade unions and the private sector to achieve equality between women and men in their ranks, including equal participation in their decision-making bodies and in negotiations in all areas and at all levels;
- (e) Develop communications strategies to promote public debate on the new roles of men and women in society, and in the family as defined in paragraph 29 above;
- (f) Restructure recruitment and career-development programmes to ensure that all women, especially young women, have equal access to managerial, entrepreneurial, technical and leadership training, including on-the-job training;
- (g) Develop career advancement programmes for women of all ages that include career planning, tracking, mentoring, coaching, training and retraining;
- (h) Encourage and support the participation of women's non-governmental organizations in United Nations conferences and their preparatory processes;
- (i) Aim at and support gender balance in the composition of delegations to the United Nations and other international forums.

Strategic Objective G.2: Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.

195. By Governments, national bodies, the private sector, political parties, trade unions, employers' organizations, subregional and regional bodies, non-governmental and international organizations and educational institutions:

- (a) Provide leadership and self-esteem training to assist women and girls, particularly those with special needs, women with disabilities and women belonging to racial and ethnic minorities to strengthen their self-esteem and to encourage them to take decision-making positions;
- (b) Have transparent criteria for decision-making positions and ensure that the selecting bodies have a gender-balanced composition;
- (c) Create a system of mentoring for inexperienced women and, in particular, offer training, including training in leadership and decision-making, public speaking and self-assertion, as well as in political campaigning;

- (d) Provide gender-sensitive training for women and men to promote non-discriminatory working relationships and respect for diversity in work and management styles;
- (e) Develop mechanisms and training to encourage women to participate in the electoral process, political activities and other leadership areas.

Appendix 6: Excerpts from Section 42(c) of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 (amending Section 17 of the Electoral Act 1997)

- (a) Payments calculated in accordance with this Part shall be reduced by 50 per cent, unless at least 30 per cent of the candidates whose candidatures were authenticated by the qualified party at the preceding general election were women and at least 30 per cent were men.
- (b) Paragraph (a)—
 - (i) comes into operation on the polling day at the general election held next after section 42 of the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act 2012 comes into operation, and
 - (ii) ceases to have effect on the polling day at the general election held next after the expiration of 7 years from the polling day specified in subparagraph (i).
- (c) Payments calculated in accordance with this Part shall be reduced by 50 per cent, unless at least 40 per cent of the candidates whose candidatures were authenticated by the qualified party at the preceding general election were women and at least 40 per cent were men.
- (d) Paragraph (c) comes into operation on the day after the day on which paragraph (a) ceases to have effect.”.

Appendix 7: Articles 27 and 111.6 of Law No.3/L-073 on General Elections in the Republic of Kosovo

27.1 In each Political Entity's candidate list, at least thirty (30%) percent shall be male and at least thirty (30%) percent shall be female, with one candidate from each gender included at least once in each group of three candidates, counting from the first candidate in the list.

27.2 This article has no application to lists consisting of one or two candidates.

111.6 If, after the allocation of seats as set out in paragraph 5 of this Article, the candidates of the minority gender within a Political Entity have not been allocated at least 30% of the total seats for that Political Entity, the last elected candidate of the majority gender will be replaced by the next candidate of the opposite gender on the reordered candidate list until the total number of seats allocated to the minority gender is at least 30%.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

19 March 2014

NIAR 210-14

Michael Potter

Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly - Update

1 Introduction

This note has been prepared for the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) in the context of the Committee's consideration of topics for review. The note updates the Research Paper Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly¹, presented to the AERC on 10 September 2013².

The Northern Ireland Assembly debated a motion on women in politics on 10 March 2014 and resolved³:

That this Assembly recognises the lack of female representation in politics and public life; further recognises the positive outcomes that result in tackling this inequality, when support and training programmes are put in place to encourage more female candidates to stand in elections; and calls for the introduction of a training and support programme to encourage more female candidates to stand for election.

-
- 1 Research and Information Service Research Paper 09/14 Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly 3 September 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf.
 - 2 Assembly and Executive Review Committee meeting 10 September 2013: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/MInutes-of-Proceedings1/>.
 - 3 Northern Ireland Assembly debate 10 March 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Reports-13-14/10-March-2014/#5>
-

A brief summary of actions in the National Assembly of Wales and the Scottish Parliament with reference to encouraging more women into politics is outlined below.

2 National Assembly of Wales

Forty percent of Assembly Members (AM) in the National Assembly for Wales are female⁴. In 2012, the Presiding Officer for the National Assembly for Wales, Dame Rosemary Butler, instigated an initiative to encourage more women into public life for the 2016 elections. The initiative, 'Women in Public Life', began as a series of seminars to examine the barriers women face to participation⁵.

The initiative has included the following actions:

- Creation of a Women in Public Life Portal, with relevant information to encourage women into public life⁶
- Lecture series, including women in science and technology, sport, positions of power and media⁷
- Women in Public Life conference to end the seminar series⁸
- Women in Public Life Development Scheme for 10-12 women to receive training and development with a view to participation in public life⁹

3 The Scottish Parliament

Thirty five percent of Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) are female¹⁰. On 15-16 March 2013, the Scottish Parliament hosted the British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians Inaugural Conference¹¹. This conference takes the theme 'Enhancing the Participation of Women in Politics' and explores issues around challenges to women parliamentarians, how barriers can be addressed, selection issues and the portrayal of women in politics in the media¹².

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians group of the BIMR region of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association has been newly established to consider issues for women parliamentarians within the region.

4 House of Commons Standard Note SN/SG/1250 Women in Parliament and Government 13 November 2013, p.3: <http://www.parliament.uk/Templates/BriefingPapers/Pages/BPPdfDownload.aspx?bp-id=SN01250>.

5 'Women in Public Life' initiative, National Assembly for Wales: http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/about_us-commission_assembly_administration/abt-presiding-officer/wipl-home.htm.

6 Women in Public Life Portal: <http://www.wmad.org.uk/wipl>.

7 Women in Public Life lectures: http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/about_us-commission_assembly_administration/abt-presiding-officer/wipl-home/women_in_public_life_-_lectures.htm.

8 Women in Public Life conference: http://www.assemblywales.org/abthome/about_us-commission_assembly_administration/abt-presiding-officer/wipl-home/women-in-public-life-conference.htm

9 Women in Public Life Development Scheme: <http://www.wmad.org.uk/powipl-scheme>.

10 House of Commons Standard Note SN/SG/1250 Women in Parliament and Government 13 November 2013, p.3.

11 Parliament to host international conference on political perspectives of women, Scottish Parliament news release 10 February 2014: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/newsandmediacentre/72945.aspx>.

12 British Islands and Mediterranean Region (BIMR) Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) Inaugural Conference draft programme: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/POandUKandIRO/Programme.pdf>.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

1 May 2014

NIAR 298-14

Michael Potter

Women in Local Councils: Statistical Overview

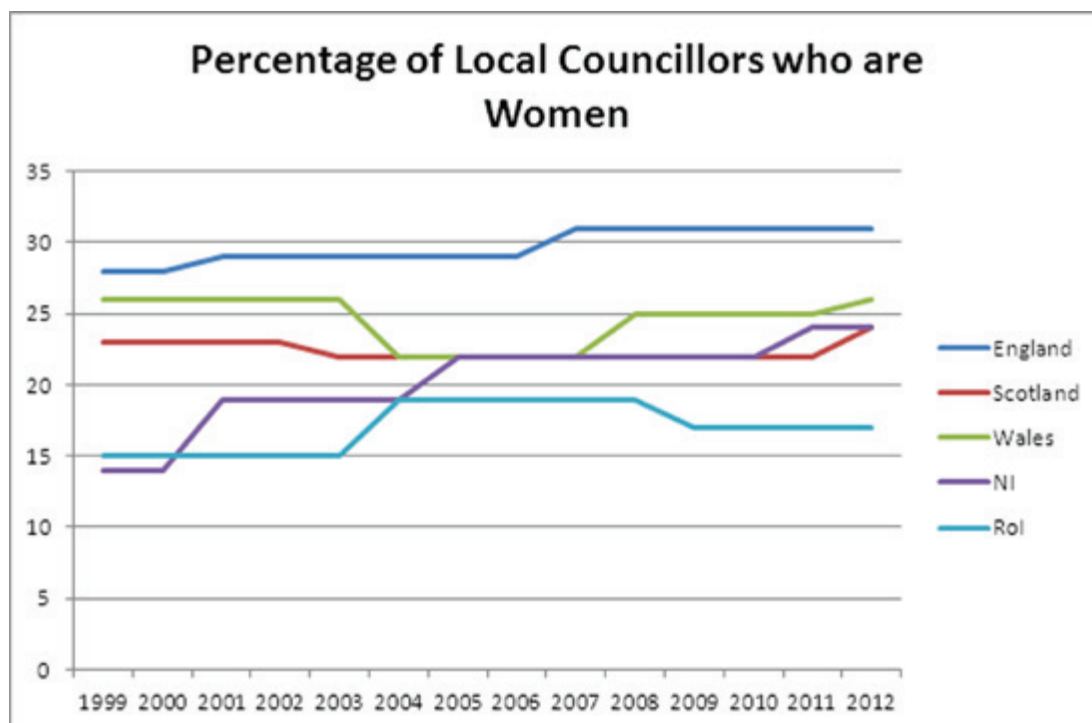
1 Introduction

This Briefing Note supplements previous papers¹ written in the context of a review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee review of the representation of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Note gives figures for women's representation in local councils in England, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland 1999-2012.

¹ Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14 Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, 3 September 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf; Research and Information Service Briefing Note Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly – Update, 19 March 2014, tabled at the Committee 25 March 2014

2 Comparative Female Representation at Local Councils

The following chart shows the representation of women in local government in England², Wales³, Scotland⁴ and the Republic of Ireland⁵ in comparison with Northern Ireland⁶.



The chart indicates that England has higher representation of women in local councils, levelling at around 31% over the past few years. Northern Ireland came from a low base of 14% in 1999 to a current high of 23.5%, currently below Scotland's 24.3% and the 26.3% for Wales. The Republic of Ireland maintains the lowest level of female representation, where a gender quota has been introduced for elections to Dáil Éireann, but not for local elections.

- 2 Stuart Wilks-Heeg, Andrew Blick and Stephen Crone (2012), *How Democratic is the UK? The 2012 Audit*, London: Democratic Audit UK, p.374: <http://www.democraticaudit.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/auditing-the-uk-democracy-the-framework.pdf>; Electoral Reform Society (2007), *Local Authority Elections in England*, London: Electoral Reform Society, p.16: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/downloadfile.php?PublicationFile=41>; Centre for Women and Democracy (2011), *Representative Democracy? Women in the 2011 Local Elections in England*, Leeds: CFWD, p.5: <http://www.cfwd.org.uk/uploads/pdfs/RepresentativeDemocracyFinal.pdf>.
- 3 Electoral Reform Society Wales (2012), *Spotlight on Wales: Women and Local Government*, Cardiff: ERSW, p.1: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/images/dynamicimages/file/Wales/Women%20and%20local%20government%20in%20Wales.pdf>.
- 4 Meryl Kenny and Fiona McKay (2012), 'Less Male, Pale and Stale? Women and the 2012 Scottish Local Elections' in *Scottish Affairs* 80, p.20; Electoral Reform Society (2007), *Local Authority Elections in Scotland*, Glasgow: Electoral Reform Society, p.58: <http://www.electoral-reform.org.uk/downloadfile.php?PublicationFile=47>; Esther Breitenbach and Fran Wasoff (2006), *A Gender Audit of Statistics: Comparing the Position of Women and Men in Scotland*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, p.36: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/172901/0048232.pdf>.
- 5 Aodh Quinlivan and Fiona Buckley (2014), 'Lack of female local politicians in Ireland is a growing concern' in *The Guardian* 23 January 2014: <http://www.theguardian.com/local-government-network/women-leadership-blog/2014/jan/23/women-local-irish-politics-under-represented>.
- 6 Yvonne Galligan (2014), 'Women in Politics', presentation to the Northern Ireland Assembly Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series, 20 March 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/knowledge_exchange/briefing_papers/series3/galligan200314.pdf; Margaret Ward (2001), *Women and the Local Government Elections*, Belfast: Democratic Dialogue, available through the CAIN web service: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/dd/papers/women-local.htm>; Department of Finance and Personnel (2011), *Women in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: DFP, p.22; Yvonne Galligan (2013), 'Gender and Politics in Northern Ireland: The Representation Gap Revisited' in *Irish Political Studies* 28 (3), p.417.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

1 May 2014

NIAR 298b-14

Michael Potter

Candidates for the 2014 Elections in Northern Ireland by Gender

1 Introduction

This Briefing Note supplements previous papers¹ written in the context of a review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee of the representation of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Note summarises candidates for the European and local government election in Northern Ireland by gender.

¹ Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14 Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, 3 September 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf; Research and Information Service Briefing Note Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly – Update, 19 March 2014, tabled at the Committee 25 March 2014.

2 Candidates for Election to the European Parliament 2014

The following table summarises the candidate list for election to the European Parliament. Four of the ten candidates are women (40%).

Party	Male	Female
Traditional Unionist Voice	Jim Allister	
Sinn Féin		Martina Anderson
Social Democratic and Labour Party	Alex Attwood	
NI Conservatives	Mark Brotherton	
Green Party	Ross Brown	
Democratic Unionist Party		Diane Dodds
Alliance Party		Anna Lo
Aspire to Better		Tina McKenzie
Ulster Unionist Party	Jim Nicholson	
UK Independence Party	Henry Reilly	
Total	6	4

3 Candidates for the Local Government Elections 2014

The table on the following page shows the candidates for the elections to the eleven 'shadow' councils in Northern Ireland, following local government reform. Table shows male and female representation by council area and party.

The figures suggest that 24% of candidates are female, ranging from 33% to 0% depending on party. Mid and East Antrim has the lowest proportion of female candidates (17%) and Belfast the highest (30%).

The proportion of women candidates matches the current proportion of sitting women councillors, which suggests there will not be a significant increase after the elections.

Council		DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance	Green	TUV	UKIP	NI21	PUP	NI Con	Other	Indep.	Total
Antrim and Newtownabbey	M	17	5	11	5	8	-	4	-	3	4	-	-	2	59
	F	5	2	1	2	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	14
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	M	13	11	11	7	5	-	3	3	3	3	-	1	2	62
	F	4	5	5	5	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	21
Belfast	M	15	15	9	11	10	3	4	2	6	7	3	10	4	99
	F	6	9	1	4	7	2	1	-	7	2	-	3	-	42
Causeway Coast and Glens	M	14	8	10	6	4	-	6	3	2	1	1	-	4	59
	F	5	4	2	7	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	23
Derry and Strabane	M	6	15	3	16	3	-	1	3	-	1	-	-	8	56
	F	4	6	2	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	18
Fermanagh and Omagh	M	8	15	9	6	3	2	2	1	-	-	-	1	1	48
	F	3	6	1	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	19
Lisburn and Castlereagh	M	18	-	8	5	6	3	6	2	10	1	1	-	2	62
	F	8	3	1	1	3	-	-	1	2	1	-	-	1	21
Mid and East Antrim	M	19	4	10	3	7	-	8	1	2	5	1	2	8	70
	F	6	1	1	1	3	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	14

Council		DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance	Green	TUV	UKIP	NI21	PUP	NI Con	Other	Indep.	Total
Mid Ulster	M	7	15	10	5	1	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	5	48
	F	4	5	-	5	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15
Newry, Mourne and Down	M	5	14	8	13	3	-	1	2	2	-	-	-	6	54
	F	2	5	1	5	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	14
Council		DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance	Green	TUV	UKIP	NI21	PUP	NI Con	Other	Indep.	Total
North Down and Ards	M	19	-	10	2	8	2	5	2	5	-	7	1	6	67
	F	4	1	2	1	4	2	-	1	2	-	-	1	2	20
Total	M	141	101	99	80	58	10	44	20	33	22	13	15	48	684
	F	51	47	17	40	24	4	5	2	15	3	-	5	8	221
Percent female		27	32	15	33	30	29	10	9	31	12	0	25	14	24



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

21 May 2014

NIAR 333-14

Michael Potter

Female Candidates in Local Elections in Northern Ireland

1 Introduction

This Note has been prepared in the context of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee review on women in the Northern Ireland Assembly¹. The Note summarises female candidates by party in local elections in Northern Ireland.

¹ Assembly and Executive Review Committee meeting 6 May 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/May-2014/Women-in-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly-Research-and-Information-Service-Briefing/>.

2 Female Candidates in Local Elections in Northern Ireland

The following table shows percentages of female candidate by party and by year since 1997². The table supplements that shown in a previous Note which summarises candidates for the 2014 local elections by party and gender³.

	1997	2001	2005	2011	2014
DUP	16%	14%	21%	24%	27%
SF	16%	19%	28%	29%	32%
UUP	12%	17%	11%	21%	15%
SDLP	22%	27%	29%	27%	33%
Alliance	33%	35%	31%	32%	30%
Green	29%	-	13%	27%	29%
TUV	-	-	-	13%	10%
UKIP	-	-	-	17%	9%
NI21	-	-	-	-	31%
PUP	9%	19%	8%	0%	12%
Conservative	38% ⁴	38%	0%	0%	0%
Other	30%	26%	14%	17%	25%
Independent	2%	9%	9%	14%	14%
Total	16%	19%	21%	24%	24%

Numbers of female independents, while increased in recent years, have remained traditionally low. This is significant due to the large numbers of independents which taken together would constitute the sixth largest grouping of candidates (fifth in some previous years).

The 'other' category in 1997, and to a certain extent in 2001, is also significantly affected by candidates standing for the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, all of whom were women.

² 1997, 2001 and 2011 figures are derived from Electoral Office results lists: <http://www.eoni.org.uk/Elections/Election-results-and-statistics>; 2005 figures are derived from results tables on the Ark website: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/flg05.htm>; figures for 2014 are derived from the nomination papers published on individual council websites.

³ Research and Information Service Briefing Note 48/14 Candidates for the 2014 Elections in Northern Ireland by Gender, 1 May 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/4814.pdf.

⁴ As 'Conservative and Unionist'.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

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NIAR 332-14

Michael Potter

The Use of Quotas to Increase the Political Representation of Women

1 Introduction

This Briefing Paper has been prepared in the context of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee review of the representation of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly¹.

The paper supplements a previous Research Paper, Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly². A brief overview of the rationale behind the use of quotas is given, a survey of types of quota, a summary where they are in use and some discussion on their effectiveness is undertaken.

2 Background to the use of Quotas for Women's Political Representation

The use of quotas has been one response to the under-representation of women in political life, particularly in terms of the numbers of women in legislatures. Part of the reasoning

1 Agreed by the Committee at the meeting of 8 April 2014, with initial evidence on 6 May 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/May-2014/Women-in-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly-Research-and-Information-Service-Briefing/>.

2 Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14, Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, 3 September 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf.

behind the use of quotas is that they enable the number of women to reach a 'critical mass' which can effect cultural change and promote the interests of women in a legislature³. Whilst opinions differ as to what would constitute a 'critical mass', a figure of around 30-40% female representation is often cited⁴.

Small numbers of women in an organisation, including political institutions, can lead to a number of effects in relation to more numerous males⁵:

- High visibility – fewer women attract greater attention and place additional pressures on how they perform
- Polarisation – the differences between male and female members are exaggerated
- Assimilation – women are seen more in terms of stereotypes rather than individuals.

The use of quotas has been subject to significant debate and, in broad terms, the following have been presented as arguments for and against their use⁶.

- For:
 - Women are half the population
 - Women's experiences should be represented
 - Sometimes women's and men's experience differ
 - Women as role models for other women
 - Larger numbers counter the 'token' effect
 - There should be a gender balance for democratic reasons
- Against:
 - Politics is a male business
 - Tension between 'freedom' and 'equality', which suggests that equal representation by such means is 'forced emancipation'
 - Quotas are illiberal and undermine freedom of choice
 - Tokenism
 - Quotas are unconstitutional in that they undermine the democratic process

Once decided upon, there are different kinds of quota. They can be legal or voluntary and could operate at different levels:

- Aspirant quotas – these are rare and difficult to apply, but they are aimed at creating a sufficient pool of eligible women with an interest in politics to be considered as candidates.
- Candidate quotas – these are the most common, intended to increase the numbers of women that the electorate may choose from, and can be voluntary or legal, with varying levels of sanction for non-compliance (no sanctions, funding penalty, rejection of a party list, etc.).
- Reserved seats – women are guaranteed a certain number of seats in a legislature regardless of the outcome of an election.

3 Sarah Childs and Mona Lena Krook (2008), 'Critical mass Theory and Women's Political Representation' in *Political Studies* 56, 725-736.

4 For example, Dorota Gierycz (2001), 'Women, Peace and the United Nations: Beyond Beijing' in Inger Skjelsbach and Dan Smith (eds.), *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, London: Sage, p.25, who suggests 30-35% to make a difference.

5 Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977), 'Some Effects of proportions on group Life: Skewed Sex Ratios and Responses to Token Women' in *American Political Science Review*, 82(5), 965-990

6 Drude Dahlerup (2006), *Women, Quotas and Politics*, London: Routledge, pp.297-300.

Even where quotas are supported, and they remain controversial Quotas are suggested to be only one provision among many, as numbers of women do not guarantee women's interests will be represented, being descriptive rather than substantive representation, and they fail address underlying conditions that exclude women⁷.

The next section looks at where quotas are in use and discusses their effectiveness.

3 The Use and Effectiveness of Quotas in National Legislatures

The list at Appendix 1 shows national legislatures in rank order according to female representation, with details of what, if any, quotas they employ.

Of the countries with 30% or more women, the most used system is a legislated candidate quota, where a party list is rejected if the quota is not fulfilled (15 examples). In another 12 examples, voluntary party quotas are used and four countries have reserved seats for women in the lower or single house (Rwanda additionally has reserved seats in its upper house, alongside a legislated candidate quota in the lower house). However, seven of the countries with 30% or more female representation have no quotas at all.

The vast majority have List-Proportional Representation (List-PR) systems, which makes the introduction of quotas relatively straightforward. Yet two have Multi-Member Proportional (MMP) and three have a First Past the Post System (FPTP). One (Senegal) has a mixed parallel system. While List-PR systems may appear to be the most common vehicle for higher female representation, this is clearly not exclusively the case.

The circumstances of the introduction of quotas are significant, as they are often introduced when new constitutions are being written⁸. This may particularly be the case in a post-conflict situation, where a proportional system with community or other identity representation arrangements are being introduced (such as in Kosovo).

In some cases, the introduction of quotas has made a significant difference, with historical leaps in women's representation. However, there have also been cases, where increases have not been as much as the quota or where women's representation has stopped at the quota and increased no further⁹. This suggests the context and the existence of other methods in tandem with (or indeed without) quotas are necessary for an increase in women's representation.

The higher representation of women in Scandinavian countries has often been held up as an example. However, higher levels of representation in the 1970s preceded the introduction of quotas in the 1980s, and even then they have always been voluntary, and it has been noted that it took sixty years for Scandinavian countries to reach 20% female representation and seventy for 30%, suggesting a 'fast track' may have been more appropriate¹⁰.

Quotas have been discontinued by parties in Denmark. There has been no specific suggestion that the use of quotas has run its course, but there are certainly larger numbers of women involved in Danish politics than in the past, as is the case across Scandinavia.

7 Susan Williams (2009), *Constituting Equality: Gender Equality and Comparative Constitutional Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.53, 55.

8 Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall (2009), 'Gender Quotas in Politics – A Constitutional Challenge' in Susan Williams (ed.), *Constituting Equality: Gender Equality and Comparative Constitutional Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.29.

9 Drude Dahlerup (2006), *Women, Quotas and Politics*, London: Routledge, p.293.

10 Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall (2005), 'Quotas as a 'Fast Track' to Equal Representation for Women: Why Scandinavia is no Longer the Model' in *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 7(1), p.27.

Rather than this being attributed directly to quotas, the increase has been explained in the following terms¹¹:

Contrary to common perceptions, no constitutional clause or law demands a high representation of women in Scandinavia. For the most part the increase can be attributed to sustained pressure by women's groups within parties as well as the women's movement in general. Women mobilised and organised to ensure that the political parties increased their number of women candidates, that is to say, women candidates who had a fair chance of winning. The real take-off of the increase in women's representation in the Nordic countries happened in the 1970s before any party-installed candidate quotas.

On the other hand, evidence from Spain suggests that significant increases in women's representation there occurred¹²:

Because in the last two decades feminists within left-wing parties succeeded in making their parties adopt and partly implement quotas.

But this increase was also attributed to the proportional electoral system and to the increasingly secular and egalitarian society, polity and economy.

In some contexts however, the use of quotas has been instrumental in the representation of women in politics. The collapse of the Yugoslavian state and the ensuing construction of post-Yugoslav institutions in the 1990s led to a significant reduction of women in the new independent national legislatures, due to the demise of Yugoslav-era quotas and a return to 'traditional' roles for women¹³. The introduction of a 30% reserved seats for women in the Kosovo Assembly, with all its criticisms, has been regarded as placing women in the legislature would not otherwise have been there¹⁴.

It is worth noting that there are examples in the appendix where the proportion of women in the legislature is lower than the legislated quota. This can be due to one or a combination of factors such as candidates not being in winnable seats, voter preference for males, parties opting to accept sanctions rather than field the required proportion of female candidates or electoral laws being ignored.

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- 11 Drude Dahlerup (2005), 'Increasing Women's Political Representation : New Trends in Gender Quotas' in Julie Ballington and Azza Karam (eds.), *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: IDEA, p.147.
 - 12 Celia Valiente (2012), 'Women in Parliament: The Effectiveness of Quotas' in Manon Tremblay (ed.), *Women and Legislative Representation: Electoral Systems, Political Parties and Sex Quotas*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, pp.138-9.
 - 13 Slavenka Drakuli, (1993), 'Women and the New Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia' in Nanette Funk and Magda Mueller (eds.), *Gender, Politics and Post Communism*, London: Routledge, p.124.
 - 14 Interview with women's NGO, Prishtina, 16 April 2014.
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Appendix 1: Quotas in National Legislatures

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
1	Rwanda	63.8%	Legislated candidate 30%	38.5%	Reserved seats 30%
2	Andorra	50%	None	-	-
3	Cuba	48.9%	None	-	-
4	Sweden	45%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 50%, zipping or alternate	-	-
5	South Africa	44.8%	Ruling ANC has 50% voluntary candidate quota	34%	Ruling ANC has 50% voluntary quota
6	Seychelles	43.8%	None	-	-
7	Senegal	43.3%	Legislated alternate male and female candidates	-	-
8	Finland	42.5%	None	-	-
9	Nicaragua	42.4%	Legislated 50% candidates	-	-
10	Ecuador	41.6%	Legislated alternate candidates	-	-
11	Belgium	41.3%	Legislated candidate: no sex exceeded by more than one	39.4%	Legislated no sex exceeded by more than one
12	Iceland	39.7%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 40%	-	-
-	Spain	39.7%	Legislated 40% candidates	33.5%	Legislated 40% candidates
13	Norway	39.6%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 40-50%	-	-
14	Mozambique	39.2%	Ruling FRELIMO has 40% voluntary candidate quota	-	-

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
15	Denmark	39.1%	Voluntary party candidate quotas have been discontinued	-	-
16	Netherlands	38.7%	Some parties have candidate quotas	36%	Some parties have candidate quotas
17	Timor Leste	38.5%	Legislated 1 in 3 candidates to be female	-	-
18	Mexico	37.4%	Legislated 40% candidates	34.4%	Legislated 40% candidates
19	Angola	36.8%	Legislated 30% quota	-	-
20	Argentina	36.6%	Legislated 30% candidates	38.9%	Legislated 30% candidates
21	Germany	36.5%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 40-50%	27.5%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 40-50%
22	Tanzania	36%	Reserved seats 30%	-	-
23	Uganda	35%	Reserved seats – special ballot in each district for women only	-	-
24	Macedonia	34.1%	Legislated 1 in 3 candidates	-	-
25	New Zealand	33.9%	None	-	-
26	Costa Rica	33.3%	Legislated alternate candidates	-	-
-	Grenada	33.3%	None	15.4%	None
-	Slovenia	33.3%	Legislated 35% candidates	7.5%	None
27	Austria	32.2%	Voluntary party quotas 33.3-50%	29%	Voluntary party quotas 33.3-50%
28	Algeria	31.6%	Legislated variable candidate quotas 20-50%	6.9%	None
29	Zimbabwe	31.5%	Reserved seats: additional 60 women-only election	47.5%	Legislated 60 of 80 seats alternate

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
30	Italy	31.4%	Voluntary party candidate quotas (1 party 50%)	29%	Voluntary party candidate quotas (1 party 50%)
31	Guyana	31.3%	Legislated one third candidates	-	-
-	Portugal	31.3%	Legislated 33% candidates	-	-
32	Cameroon	31.1%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 25-30%	20%	
33	Switzerland	31%	Voluntary party candidate quotas – 1 party 40%	19.6%	Voluntary party candidate quotas – 1 party 40%
34	Burundi	30.5%	Reserved seats 30%	46.3%	Reserved seats 30%
35	Nepal	29.9%	Legislated one third candidates	-	-
36	Trinidad and Tobago	28.6%	None	19.4%	None
37	Luxembourg	28.3%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 33-50%	-	-
38	Tunisia	28.1%	Legislated parity for candidates, except where numbers are odd	-	-
39	Ethiopia	27.8%	None	16.3%	None
40	Afghanistan	27.7%	Reserved seats 27%	27.5%	Reserved seats: 50% of seats appointed by the president (a third of total)
41	El Salvador	27.4%	Legislated candidate quotas 30%	-	-
42	Philippines	27.3%	Voluntary candidate quotas (1 party 25%), 1 all-woman party	25%	Voluntary candidate quotas (1 party 25%), 1 all-woman party

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
43	Lesotho	26.7%	Legislated candidate quota for 40 of 120 seats	27.3%	None
44	Belarus	26.6%	None	35.1%	None
45	South Sudan	26.5%	Reserved seats 25%	10%	Reserved seats 25%
46	Turkmenistan	26.4%	None	-	-
47	France	26.2%	Legislated candidate quotas, difference between male and female candidates cannot exceed 2%	22.5%	Legislated candidate quotas: alternate or twinning, depending on district
48	Australia	26%	Voluntary party candidate quotas, 1 party 40%	41.3%	Voluntary candidate quotas, 1 party 40%
49	Honduras	25.8%	Legislated candidate quota 40%	-	-
50	Namibia	25.6%	Voluntary party candidate quota, 1 party alternate ('zebra')	26.9%	Voluntary party candidate quota, 1 party alternate ('zebra')
51	Bolivia	25.4%	Legislated candidate quota 50% (to apply from 2014)	47.2%	Legislated candidate quota 50% (to apply from 2014)
52	Singapore	25.3%	None	-	-
53	Iraq	25.2%	Reserved seats, not less than a quarter	-	-
-	Kazakhstan	25.2%	None, but 1 all-women party	6.4%	None, but 1 all-women party
-	Mauretania	25.2%	Legislated candidate quota, 1 in 3-seat districts, alternate in larger districts	14.3%	Legislated candidate quota, 1 in every 4 constituencies
54	Canada	25.1%	Voluntary party candidate targets 25-50%	39.6%	Voluntary party candidate quotas, 25-50% targets

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
55	Lao people's Democratic Republic	25%	None	-	-
-	Latvia	25%	None	-	-
56	Bulgaria	24.6%	None	-	-
57	Poland	24.3%	Legislated quota 35%	13%	Legislated quota 35%
-	Sudan	24.3%	Reserved seats 25%	17.2%	None
-	Viet Nam	24.3%	None	-	-
58	Lithuania	24.1%	Voluntary party candidate quota, 1 party one third	-	-
59	Equatorial Guinea	24%	None	10.7%	None
60	Croatia	23.8%	Voluntary party candidate quota, 1 party 40%	-	-
61	China	23.4%	Reserved seats 22%	-	-
62	Kyrgyzstan	23.3%	Legislated quota 30%	-	-
63	Madagascar	23.1%	None	-	-
64	United Kingdom	22.6%	Voluntary party candidate targets 40-50%	23.4%	
65	Israel	22.5%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 20-40%	-	-
66	Malawi	22.3%	Voluntary party candidate targets 25-33%	-	-
-	Peru	22.3%	Legislated candidate quota 30%	-	-
67	Eritrea	22%	Reserved seats 30%	-	-
-	Uzbekistan	22%	Legislated candidate quota 30%	15%	None
68	Guinea	21.9%	Legislated candidate quota 30% for two thirds of seats	-	-

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
69	Bosnia and Herzegovina	21.4%	Legislated candidate quota 40%	13.3%	None
70	Greece	21%	Legislated candidate quota one third	-	-
71	Cabo Verde	20.8%	Legislated candidate quota 25%	-	-
-	Dominican Republic	20.8%	Legislated candidate quota 33%	9.4%	None
-	Monaco	20.8%	None	-	-
72	Pakistan	20.7%	Reserved seats 17%	16.3%	Reserved seats: 17 of 104
73	Cambodia	20.3%	None	14.8%	None
74	Albania	20%	Legislated candidate quota 30%	-	-
-	Liechtenstein	20%	None	-	-
75	Saudi Arabia	19.9%	Reserved seats 20%	-	-
76	Czech Republic	19.5%	Voluntary party candidate quota, 1 party 25%	17.3%	None
77	Bangladesh	19.3%	Reserved seats: 50 of 350	-	-
78	Kenya	19.1%	Reserved seats: 47 of 349 seats contested by women only; Legislated candidate quota, no more two thirds of either sex	26.5%	Reserved seats: 18 of 67 seats contested by women only; Legislated candidate quota, no more two thirds of either sex
79	Estonia	19%	None	-	-
80	Burkina Faso	18.9%	Legislated candidate quota 30%	-	-
81	Mauritius	18.8%	None	-	-
-	Republic of Moldova	18.8%	None	-	-

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
82	Slovakia	18.7%	Voluntary party candidate target, 1 party	-	-
83	Indonesia	18.6%	Legislated candidate quota 30%	-	-
84	San Marino	18.3%	None	-	-
-	United States of America	18.3%	None	20%	None
85	Sao Tome	18.2%	None	-	-
86	Togo	17.6%	Legislated candidate quota equal numbers of women and men	-	-
87	United Arab Emirates	17.5%	None	-	-
88	Morocco	17%	Reserved seats: 60 of 395	2.2%	None
-	Venezuela	17%	A 30% legislated quota was used in 1998, but was declared unconstitutional for subsequent elections	-	-
89	Barbados	16.7%	None	28.6%	None
-	Saint Lucia	16.7%	None	18.2%	None
90	Libya	16.5%	Legislated candidate quota, alternate for 80 of 200 seats	-	-
91	Tajikistan	15.9%	None	11.8%	None
92	Chile	15.8%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 20-40%	18.4%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 20-40%
93	Ireland	15.7%	Legislated candidate quota 30%, rising to 40% after 7 years	31.7%	None
-	Republic of Korea	15.7%	Legislated candidate quota: 50% for 56 seats. 30% 243 seats	-	-
94	Azerbaijan	15.6%	None	-	-
95	Gabon	15%	None	16.7%	None

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
-	Paraguay	15%	Legislated candidate quota: 1 in 5	20%	Legislated candidate quota: 1 in 5
96	Chad	14.9%	None	-	-
-	Mongolia	14.9%	Legislated candidate quota 20%	-	-
97	Montenegro	14.8%	Legislated candidate quota 30%	-	-
99	Turkey	14.4%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 33-40%	-	-
100	Somalia	13.8%	Reserved seats: 30%	-	-
101	Russian Federation	13.6%	None	8%	None
102	Romania	13.5%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 30%	7.4%	Voluntary party candidate quotas, 2 parties 30%
103	Guatemala	13.3%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 30-40%	-	-
-	Niger	13.3%	Reserved seats: 10%	-	-
104	Bahamas	13.2%	None	25%	None
105	Uruguay	13.1%	Legislated candidate quota: 1 of 3 places, or 1 of 2 places	6.5%	Legislated candidate quota: 1 of 3 places, or 1 of 2 places
106	St Vincent and the Grenadines	13%	None	-	-
107	Dominica	12.9%	None	-	-
108	Djibouti	12.7%	Reserved seats: 10%	-	-
-	Jamaica	12.7%	None	28.6%	None
109	Cyprus	12.5%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 30%	-	-
110	Sierra Leone	12.1%	Voluntary party targets 30-50%	-	-

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
111	Georgia	12%	Legislation for funding incentive for 20% candidates will come into force in 2014	-	-
-	Jordan	12%	Reserved seats: 15 of 150	12%	None
-	Syrian Arab Republic	12%	None	-	-
112	Suriname	11.8%	None	-	-
113	India	11.4%	None	11.9%	None
114	Guinea-Bissau	11%	None	-	-
-	Liberia	11%	Guideline 30%, but no quotas in place	-	-
115	Ghana	10.9%	Quotas used in 1960 and 1965 only	-	-
116	Zambia	10.8%	None	-	-
117	Armenia	10.7%	Legislated candidate quota: 20% in 90 of 131 seats	-	-
118	Democratic Republic of the Congo	10.6%	Legislated candidate quota: 'to take account of equal representation'	5.6%	Legislated candidate quota: 'to take account of equal representation'
119	Antigua and Barbuda	10.5%	None	29.4%	None
120	Malaysia	10.4%	None	28.8%	None
121	Bahrain	10%	None	27.5%	None
122	Ukraine	9.7%	None	-	-
123	Botswana	9.5%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 30%	-	-
-	Mali	9.5%	Voluntary party candidate quota: 1 party 30%	-	-
124	Côte d'Ivoire	9.4%	Voluntary party candidate quota: 1 party 30%	-	-
-	Gambia	9.4%	None	-	-
-	Hungary	9.4%	Voluntary party candidate quotas 30-50%	-	-

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
126	Kiribati	8.7%	None	-	-
127	Bhutan	8.5%	None	8%	None
-	Panama	8.5%	Legislated candidate quota for internal nominations 50%	-	-
128	Benin	8.4%	None	-	-
129	Japan	8.1%	None	16.1%	None
130	Congo	7.4%	None	13.9%	None
131	Nigeria	6.7%	None	6.4%	None
-	St Kitts and Nevis	6.7%	None	-	-
-	Tuvalu	6.7%	None	-	-
132	Swaziland	6.2%	Reserved seats: 4 of 26	33.3%	Reserved seats: 8 of 30
133	Maldives	5.9%	None	-	-
134	Sri Lanka	5.8%	None	-	-
135	Myanmar	5.6%	None	1.8%	None
136	Nauru	5.3%	None	-	-
137	Kuwait	4.6%	None	-	-
138	Haiti	4.2%	Reserved seats: 30% for future elections	0%	Reserved seats: 30% for future elections
139	Samoa	4.1%	Reserved seats: 10%, to apply 2016	-	-
140	Tonga	3.6%	None	-	-
141	Belize	3.1%	None	38.5%	None
-	Iran	3.1%	None	-	-
-	Lebanon	3.1%	None	-	-
142	Comoros	3%	None	-	-
-	Marshall Islands	3%	None	-	-
143	Papua New Guinea	2.7%	None	-	-
144	Solomon Islands	2%	None	-	-
145	Oman	1.2%	None	18.1%	None
146	Yemen	0.3%	None	1.8%	None
147	Micronesia	0%	None	-	-
-	Palau	0%	None	23.1%	None

Rank	Country	Lower House		Upper House	
		% Women	Quotas	% Women	Quotas
-	Qatar	0%	None	-	-
-	Vanuatu	0%	None	-	-

* Figures are not available on the IPU database for Colombia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Serbia and Thailand.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

18 June 2014

NIAR 333b-2014

Michael Potter and Margaret Kelly

Local Elections 2014: Results by Party and Gender

1 Introduction

This Briefing Note has been prepared in the context of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee review on women in the Northern Ireland Assembly¹. The Note should be read in conjunction with Research and Information Service Briefing Note *Candidates for the 2014 Elections in Northern Ireland by Gender* ².

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- 1 Assembly and Executive Review Committee, Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly: Research and Information Service Briefing, 6 May 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2013-2014/May-2014/Women-in-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly-Research-and-Information-Service-Briefing/>.
 - 2 Research and Information Service Briefing Note 48/14 Candidates for the 2014 Elections in Northern Ireland by Gender, 1 May 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/4814.pdf.
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2 2014 Election Results by Gender

Local elections took place for the 11 new local councils in Northern Ireland on 22 May 2014. Elections also took place in England on 22 May for 32 London Boroughs, 36 Metropolitan Boroughs, 74 Second-Tier District Authorities and 20 Unitary Authorities, and local elections in the Republic of Ireland on 21 May. The following table summarises results by party and gender in Northern Ireland.

Council		DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance	Green	TUV	UKIP	NI21	PUP	Indep.	PBPA	Total
Antrim and Newtownabbey	M	11	2	11	2	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	32
	F	4	1	1	2	0	-	0	-	-	-	-	-	8
Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon	M	9	5	10	4	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	30
	F	4	3	2	2	-	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	11
Belfast	M	10	12	6	4	4	1	0	-	-	2	-	1	40
	F	3	7	1	3	4	0	1	-	-	1	-	0	20
Causeway Coast and Glens	M	10	5	8	1	1	-	2	-	-	1	1	-	29
	F	1	2	2	5	0	-	1	-	-	0	0	-	11
Derry and Strabane	M	6	11	1	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	30
	F	2	5	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	10
Fermanagh and Omagh	M	5	14	8	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	30
	F	0	3	1	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	10
Lisburn and Castlereagh	M	15	-	7	3	4	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	31
	F	5	-	1	0	3	-	0	-	0	-	-	-	9
Mid and East Antrim	M	10	2	8	1	2	-	3	1	-	-	2	-	29
	F	6	1	1	0	1	-	2	0	-	-	0	-	11

Council		DUP	SF	UUP	SDLP	Alliance	Green	TUV	UKIP	NI21	PUP	Indep.	PBPA	Total
Mid Ulster	M	5	14	7	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	30
	F	3	4	0	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	-	10
Newry, Mourne and Down	M	4	9	3	10	2	-	-	1	-	-	3	-	32
	F	0	5	0	4	0	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	9
North Down and Ards	M	15	-	7	1	5	2	1	-	-	-	2	-	33
	F	2	-	2	0	2	1	0	-	-	-	0	-	7
Total	M	100	74	76	40	22	3	9	3	1	3	14	1	346
	F	30	31	12	26	10	1	4	0	0	1	1	0	116
Percent female		23	30	14	39	31	25	31	0	0	25	7	0	25

The table indicates that, while there is considerable variation of success for female candidates according to party, the overall proportion of female representatives remains at around a quarter. In broad terms, the proportion of women elected approximates the proportion that stand for election (24% in 2014), which has generally been the case for previous local elections, and the overall proportion of women in local councils has shown a very shallow increase in the last decade (21% in 2005 to 23.5% at the last election in 2011)³.

Results from the Republic of Ireland suggest that 22% of those elected to councils are women⁴. Consolidated figures for the various elections in England are not available by gender at the time of writing. Scotland and Wales did not have local elections.

3 See Research and Information Service Briefing Note 56/14 Female Candidates in Local Elections in Northern Ireland, 21 May 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/5614.pdf; and Research and Information Service Briefing Note 47/14 Women in Local Councils: Statistical Overview 1 May 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/4714.pdf.

4 Figures derived from council websites.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

19 June 2014

NIAR 405-14

Michael Potter

Who Runs Northern Ireland? A Summary of Statistics Relating to Gender and Power

1 Introduction

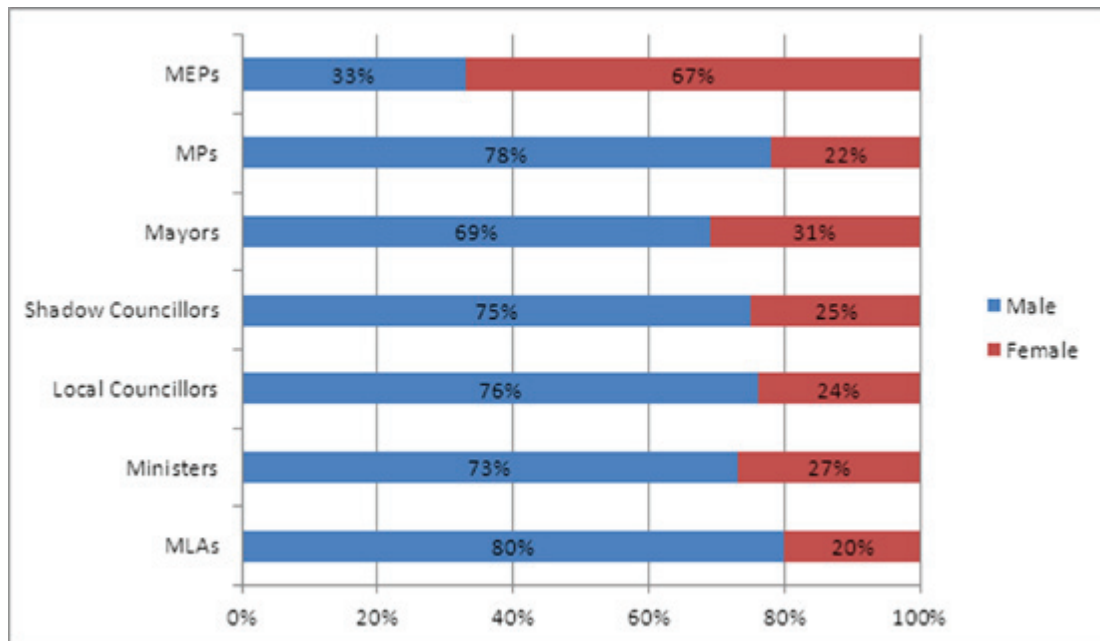
This Briefing Paper is prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) of the representation of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The paper summarises statistics on gender representation in decision-making positions in Northern Ireland¹.

The statistics are set out in simplified tables to offer an at-a-glance view of gender and power in Northern Ireland.

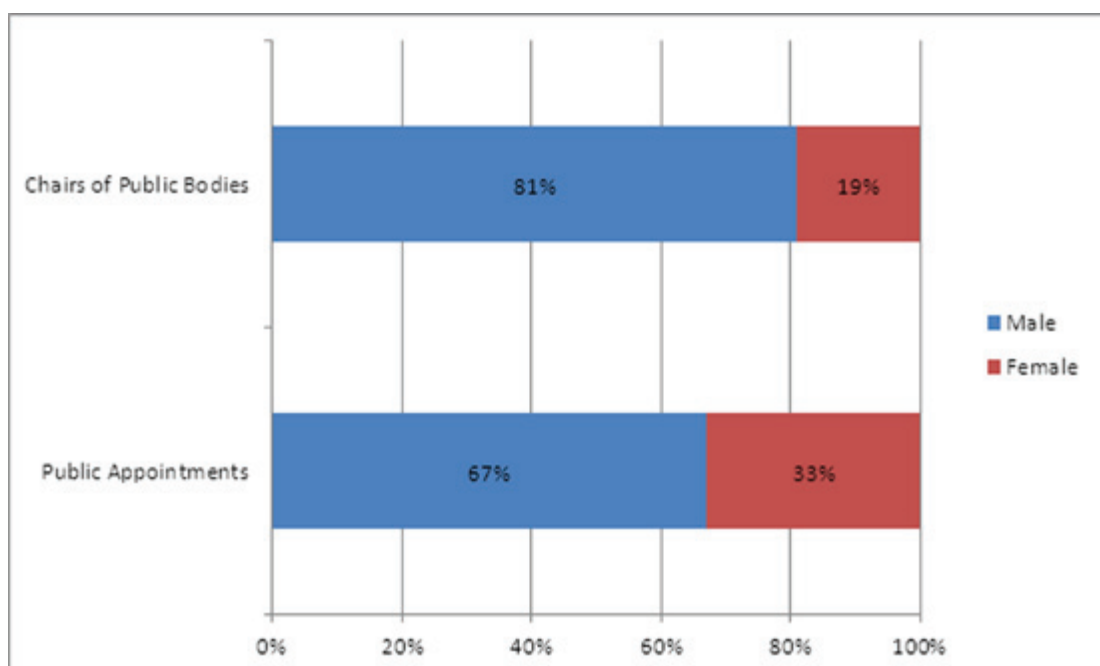
¹ The majority of figures in this paper are taken from Department of Finance and Personnel (2013), Women in Northern Ireland, Belfast: DFP: http://www.detini.gov.uk/women_in_northern_ireland_september_2013.pdf; and Research and Information Service Research Paper 15/14 Review of Gender Issues in Northern Ireland, 28 January 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/ofmdfm/1514.pdf>.

2 Gender Statistics for Northern Ireland

Politics²

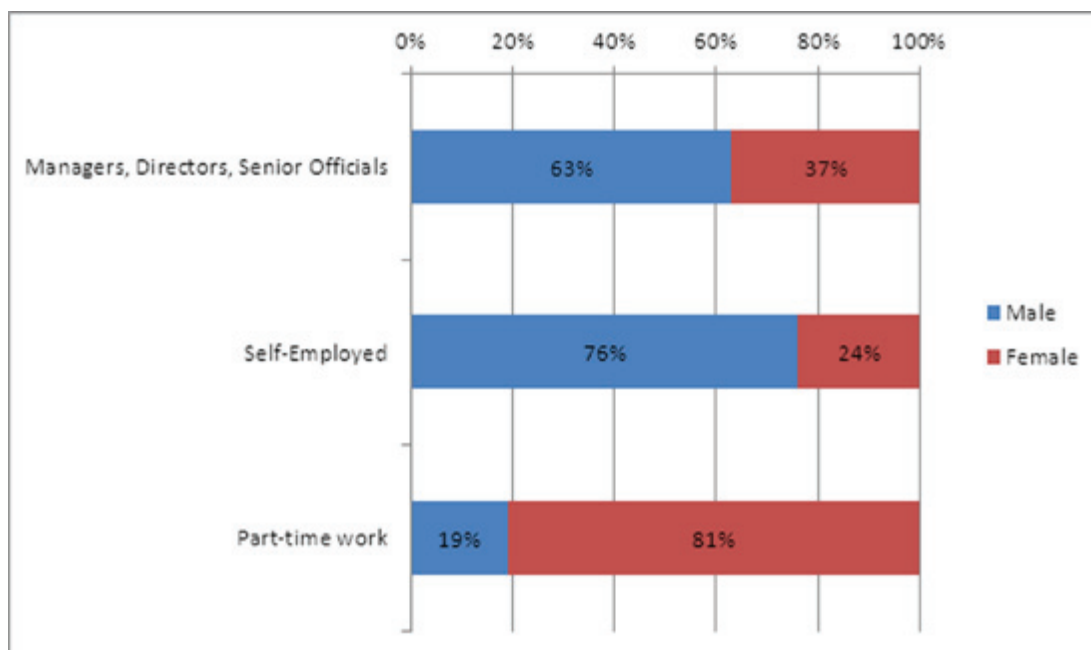


Public Appointments³

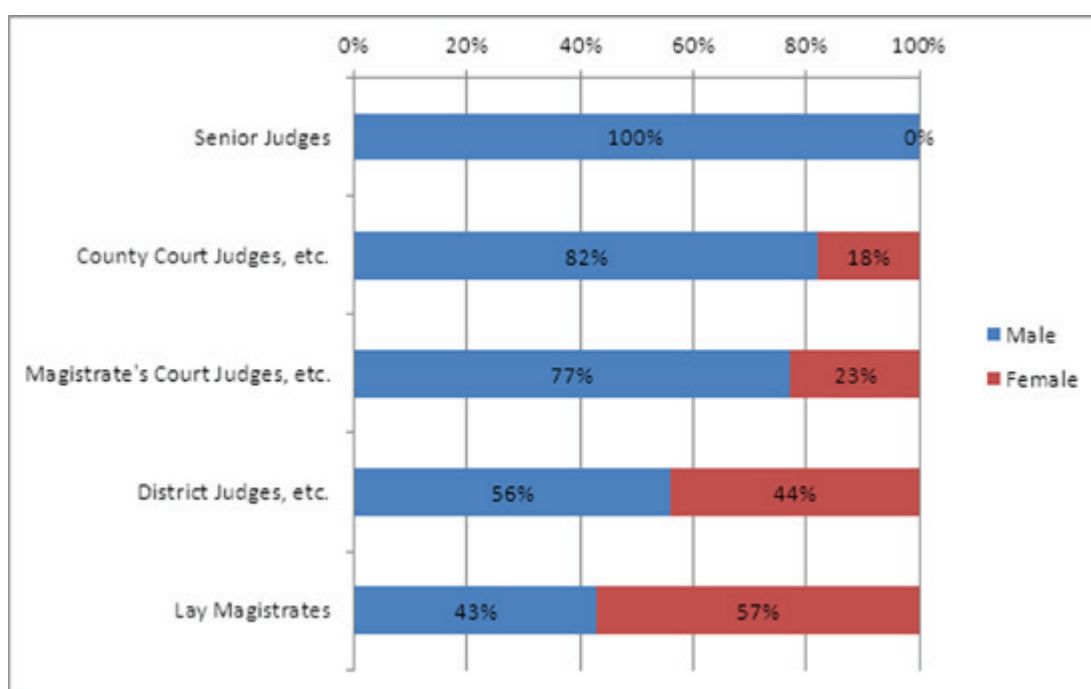


- 2 Most figures from Research and Information Service Research Paper 15/14 Review of Gender Issues in Northern Ireland, 28 January 2014, p.12; figures for 'shadow councillors' from results of the May 2014 election to 11 new councils to replace the existing 26 councils; figures of MLAs as from the appointment of Claire Sugden in May 2014.
- 3 Figures from Research and Information Service Research Paper 15/14 Review of Gender Issues in Northern Ireland, 28 January 2014, p.13

Employment⁴

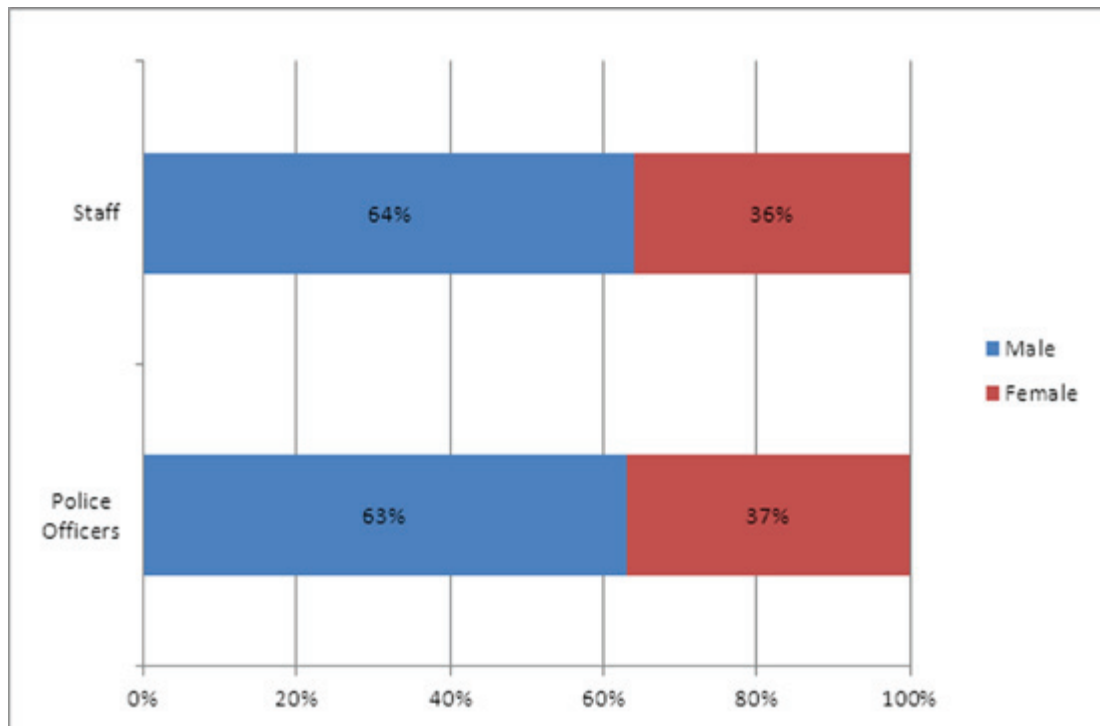
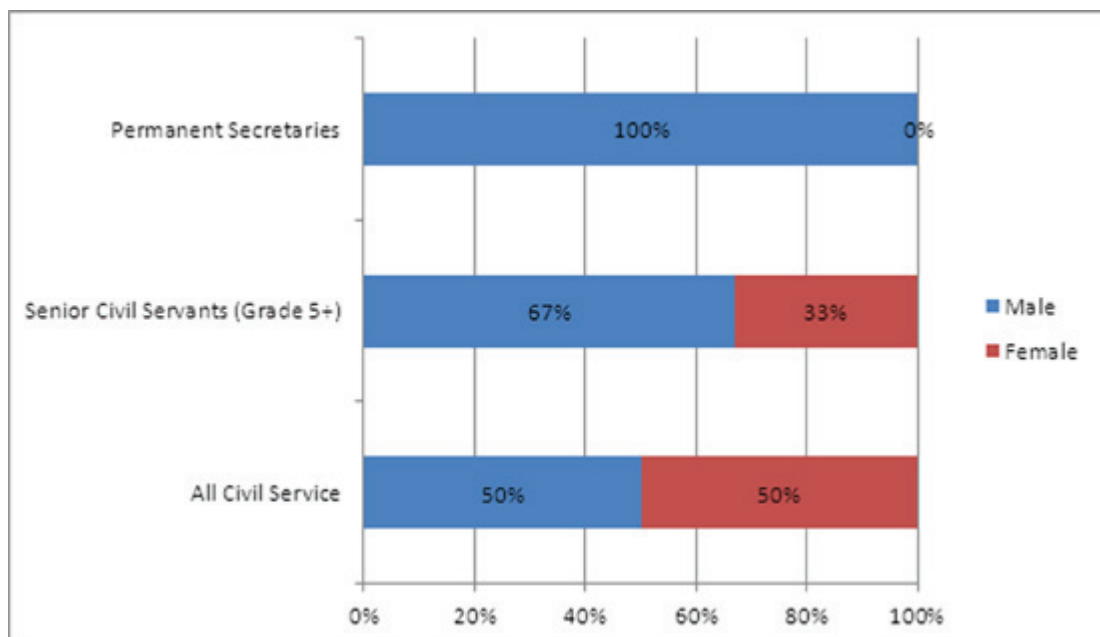


Judiciary⁵



4 Figures from the 2011 Census: Research and Information Service Research Paper 15/14 Review of Gender Issues in Northern Ireland, 28 January 2014, pp.15-16.

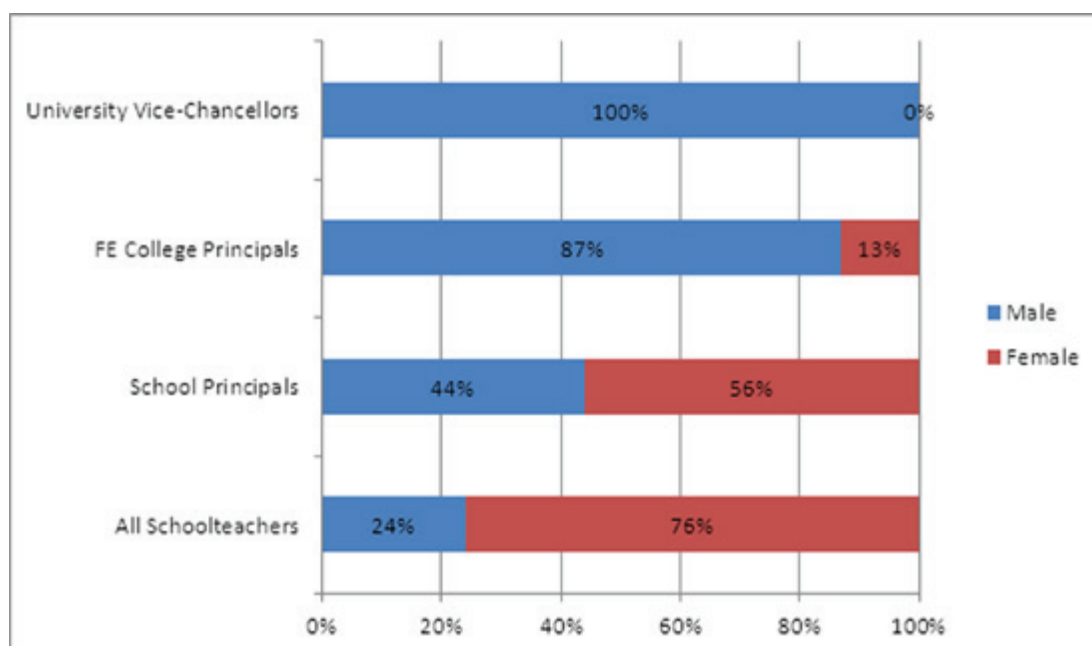
5 Figures from 2013, Research and Information Service Research Paper 15/14 Review of Gender Issues in Northern Ireland, 28 January 2014, p.45

Police⁶Civil Service⁷

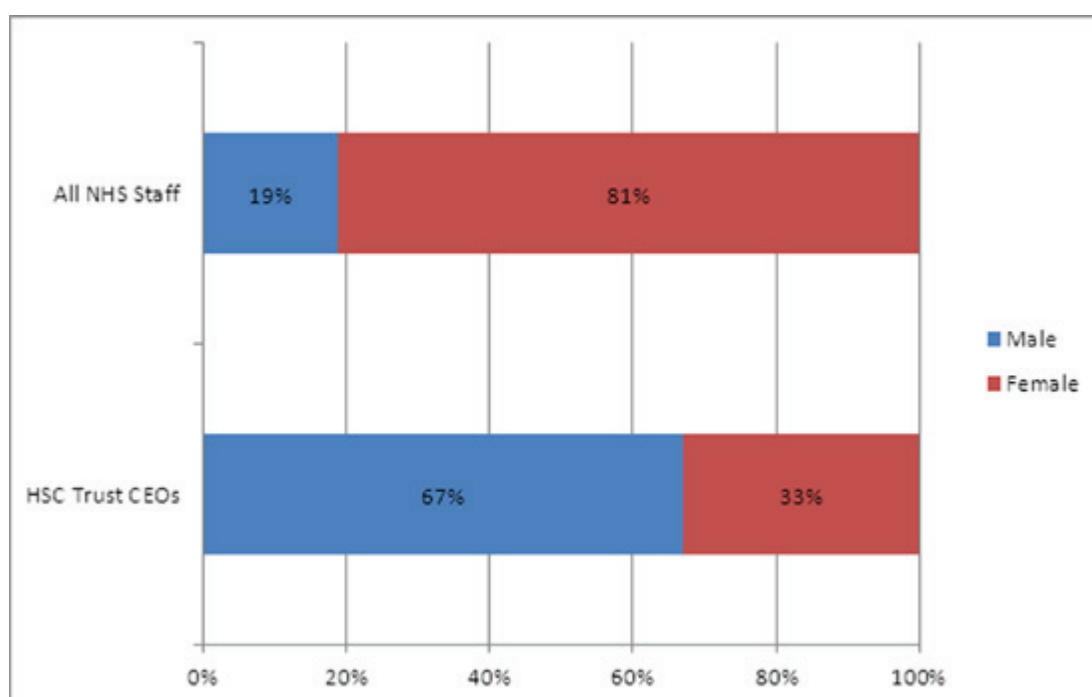
6 From 'Workforce Composition Figures', PSNI website, accessed 16 June 2014: http://www.psnipolice.uk/directory/updates/updates_statistics/updates_workforce_composition_figures.htm.

7 Department of Finance and Personnel (2012), Equality Statistics for the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Belfast: DFP, pp.4-5: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/publications/NICS%20Equality%20Report%202012.pdf>; Permanent Secretaries from Department websites accessed 17 June 2014.

Education⁸



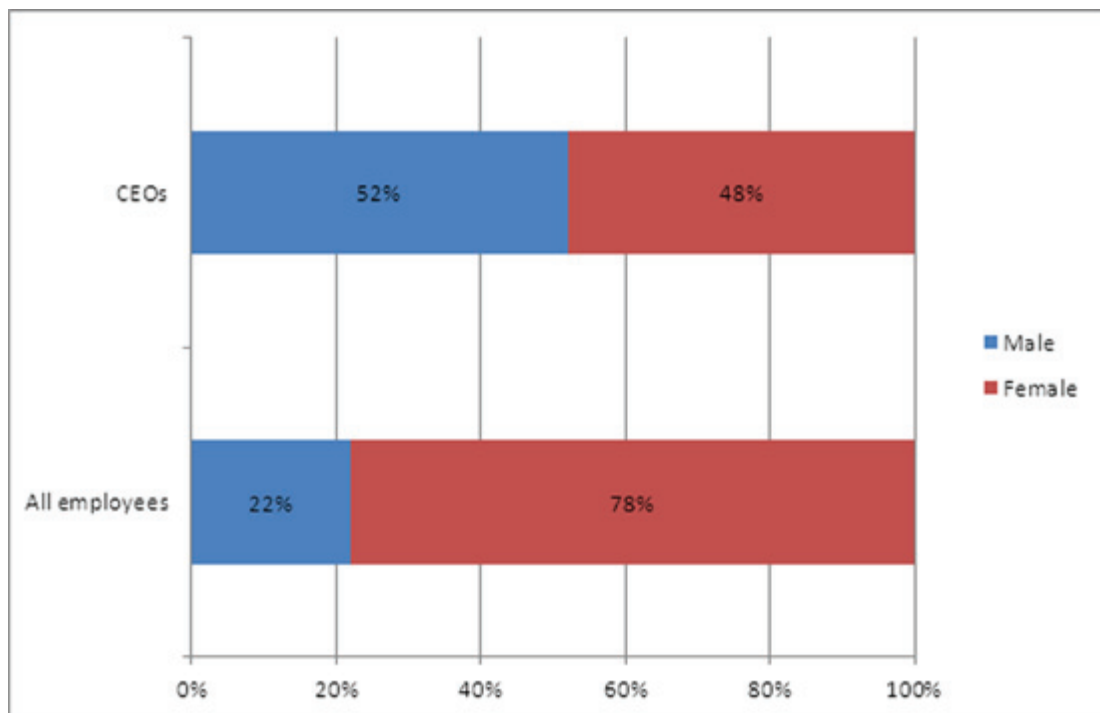
Health⁹



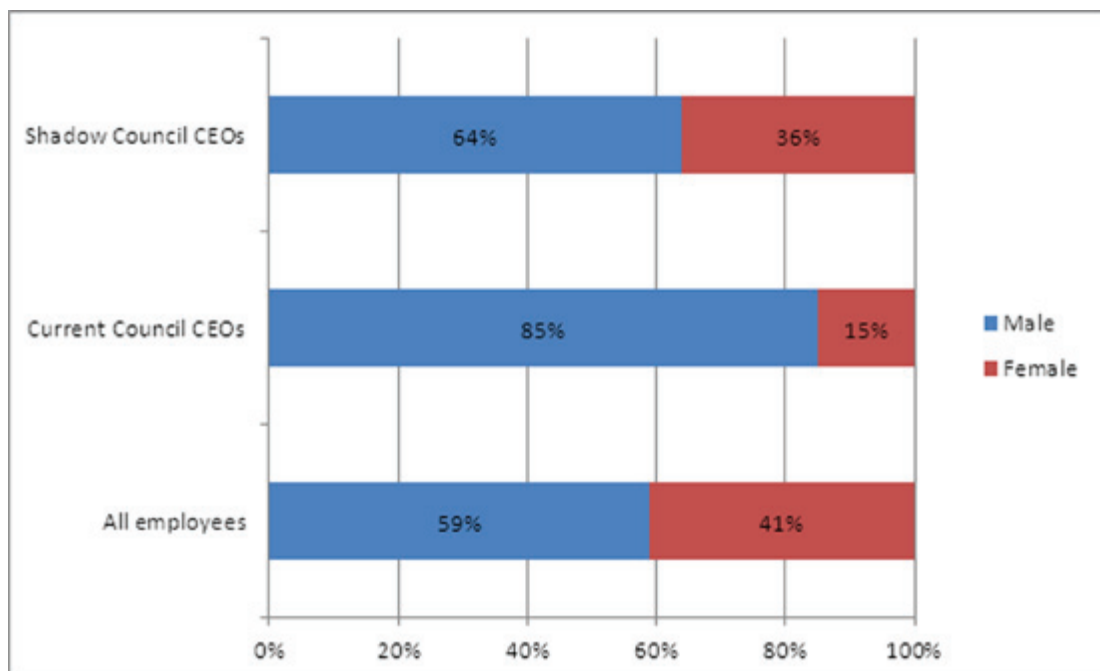
8 Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2014), Teacher Workforce Statistics in Grant-Aided Schools in Northern Ireland 2012-13, Belfast: NISRA, pp.4, 6: http://www.deni.gov.uk/revised_workforce_stats_press_release_for_web.pdf; FE College and university data from college and university websites, accessed 17 June 2014.

9 HSC Trust data from Trust websites, accessed 17 June 2014; workforce data from Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (2013), Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Workforce Census 31 March 2013, Belfast: DHSSPS, p.3: <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news-dhssps-071113-northern-ireland-health>.

Third Sector¹⁰



Local Government¹¹



10 Figures from 2011: Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (2012), State of the Sector VI, Belfast: NICVA, pp.49, 53: <http://www.nicva.org/sites/default/files/StateOfTheSectorVI-FullCopy.pdf>.

11 Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (2013), Fair Employment Monitoring Report, Belfast: ECNI, Table 7.2: <http://www.equalityni.org/Delivering-Equality/Addressing-inequality/Employment/Monitoring-Report/Monitoring-Report>; CEOs from local council websites, accessed 18 June 2014; Shadow Council CEOs appointed for new councils in operation from 2015.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

1 October 2014

NIAR 496-14

Michael Potter

The Swedish General Election 2014 and the Representation of Women

This paper reviews the Swedish general election of September 2014 from the perspective of the representation of women in politics.

Key Points

This paper seeks to explain the relatively high proportion of female political representatives in Sweden (45% in national and 43% in local legislatures) through analysis of the general election to the Swedish parliament (Riksdag) on 14 September 2014. Some contributory factors to consider are as follows:

- Context – Sweden has a range of provisions to facilitate women’s participation in wider society and to promote gender equality, for example:
 - Equality mainstreaming in government policy, including in budgets
 - Relatively generous parental leave, part of which must be taken by the second parent
 - Public childcare provision
 - Legislation considered conducive to the protection and autonomy of women
 - Statutory oversight of equality provision by a Minister for Gender Equality and an Equality Ombudsman
- Political life – Sweden has a number of features in political life that are considered beneficial for women’s participation, for example:
 - A Proportional Representation list system of elections
 - Parliamentary procedures to facilitate women’s participation, such as family-friendly sittings, childcare provision, support structures for female Members and a gender action plan
- Party policies – while there is no legal quota for female candidates in Sweden, most parties have internal policies to promote the participation of women, some having voluntary quotas
- Civil Society – explanations for levels of women’s political participation include that women’s organisations and community activists have been instrumental in pressing for greater female representation

Candidate lists for the main parties in the 2014 Riksdag election range from 30% to 53% female, with 45% of all candidates being women, and party manifestos promote women’s issues to varying degrees.

The elections returned 197 men and 152 women (44%), making a small reduction of the proportion of women from the previous mandate (45%).

Contents

Key Points

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Context: Women and Men in Sweden
- 3 Women and Political Participation in Sweden
- 4 Women and the 2014 General Election in Sweden
- 5 Analysis: Factors Contributing to the Higher Representation of Women in Politics in Sweden

Appendix 1: Women and Men in Sweden and Northern Ireland

Appendix 2: Local Government Representation in 30 European Countries

Appendix 3: Political Parties Represented in the Riksdag 2010-2014

Appendix 4: Political Parties Represented in the Riksdag Following
the 2014 General Election

1 Introduction

This Research Paper has been compiled in relation to the Assembly and Executive Review Committee review of the representation of women in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Sweden has a high representation of women in parliament (Riksdag), comprising 45% of members, but there is no legal quota in place for obligatory percentages of women candidates for parties or reserved seats in the Riksdag. This paper therefore examines the Swedish political system as a case study to establish what factors may have contributed to higher levels of participation of women in political life.

The paper gives a broad overview of the position of women in Sweden for context then looks at women in political life, including party positions and policies on women and discourses during the campaign for the general election held on 14 September 2014. Some analysis is undertaken in relation to factors that are considered to contribute to higher levels of representation of women in politics¹.

1 See Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14 *Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly*, 3 September 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf.

2 Context: Women and Men in Sweden

The representation of women in politics can be seen as a reflection of the position of women in wider society. In this respect, context is an important determinant of the extent of women's access to public life in any country. This section briefly reviews the position of women in Swedish society, with some comparison with Northern Ireland². It is not intended to be a detailed examination of every aspect of women's life in Sweden, but summarises certain factors that the Swedish Government has highlighted as contributing to the comparatively high level of gender equality in the country.

Sweden has been considered to be one of the world's most gender-egalitarian societies, due in part to an extensive welfare system that makes it easier for women and men to balance work and family life³. Features of Swedish society that are considered to have contributed to gender equality have been suggested as follows:

- **Gender equality in education** Gender equality principles permeate the Swedish school system⁴, with SEK110 million⁵ allocated to gender equality in education from 2008 in the government's Gender Equality Policy⁶. In Northern Ireland, the Gender Equality Strategy refers to addressing stereotyping in all forms of education⁷, but the Department of Education does not have a gender equality policy itself.
- **Parental leave** Swedish parents are entitled to 480 days of paid parental leave when a child is born or adopted, with sixty days being specifically allocated to each parent. In Northern Ireland, each parent is entitled to up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave⁸. Paid maternity leave is available for 39 weeks and unpaid for a further 13 weeks⁹; paid paternity leave is for two weeks¹⁰. Individual employers may have additional maternity and parental leave arrangements. The EU Directive on Parental Leave¹¹ implements a Framework Agreement of 2009, which recommends at least four months' parental leave, of which at least one month is to be on a non-transferable basis to encourage uptake by both parents.
- **Employment** The Discrimination Act in Sweden provides for safeguards against discrimination on a range of grounds, including sex, but also requires employers and employees to co-operate and undertake goal-oriented work to eliminate inequalities in

2 See also Research and Information Service Research Paper 15/14 *Review of Gender Issues in Northern Ireland* 28 January 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/ofmdfm/1514.pdf>.

3 'Gender Equality in Sweden', official Sweden website, accessed 13 August 2014: <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/>.

4 'Fixing Sweden's Schools', *The Economist* 2 November 2013: <http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21588959-swedish-pupils-have-fallen-behind-their-international-peers-fixing-swedens-schools>.

5 Approximately £4.3 million.

6 Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality (2009) *The Swedish Government's Gender Equality Policy*, Stockholm: MIGE, p.2: <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/13/07/15/8a48ffb6.pdf>.

7 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (2006), *Gender Equality Strategy*, Belfast: OFMdfM, p.50: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/genderequalitystrategy2006-2016.pdf>.

8 NI Direct website, 'Parental Leave', accessed 13 August 2014: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/parental-leave>

9 NI Direct website, 'Statutory Maternity Pay', accessed 13 August 2014: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/money-tax-and-benefits/benefits-and-financial-support/expecting-or-bringing-up-children/statutory-maternity-pay.htm>.

10 NI Direct website, 'Ordinary Paternity Leave', accessed 19 August 2014: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/ordinary-paternity-leave>.

11 COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2010:068:0013:0020:en:PDF>.

the workplace¹². In Northern Ireland, employers are required not to discriminate on the grounds of sex¹³.

- **Statutory oversight** Safeguards are in place to monitor gender equality in Sweden, and to ensure the implementation of gender equality policy. These include:
 - **Minister for Gender Equality** The Minister for Gender Equality, who is also the Deputy Minister for Education, is situated within the Ministry of Education and Research¹⁴. Northern Ireland does not have a Minister for Gender Equality, but all equalities are within the remit of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM)¹⁵.
 - **Equality Ombudsman** The Equality Ombudsman is concerned with overseeing the implementation of the Discrimination Act and the Parental Leave Act¹⁶. The agency seeks to combat discrimination on grounds of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age¹⁷. In Northern Ireland, the Equality Commission has powers and duties derived from statutes which provide for protection against discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, race, religion and political opinion, sex and sexual orientation¹⁸.
- **Legislation** The Swedish Government has enacted certain pieces of legislation that were aimed at promoting gender equality. These include:
 - **The Abortion Act** Swedish women have the right to an abortion without giving a reason up to the 18th week of pregnancy and can have an abortion up to 22 weeks if there are special reasons for doing so¹⁹. The UK Abortion Act 1967 does not extend to Northern Ireland, where abortion is only permitted under special circumstances, but the Justice Minister David Ford has stated an intention to consult on the issue during 2014²⁰, reportedly in autumn²¹.
 - **Act on Violence Against Women** Violence and abuse is assessed cumulatively in Sweden, so that each incidence is taken into account. There is specific reference to abuse by a man against a woman with whom he is in a close personal relationship, who can then be liable to a charge of 'gross violation of a woman's integrity'²². Generally, offences relating to gender-based violence in Northern Ireland are drawn from general offences relating to violence and sexual assault, with the exception of legislation relating to protection of victims²³, such as the Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998²⁴.

12 Discrimination Act 2008: <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/11/81/87/36dc60a5.pdf>.

13 For example, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1976/1042/contents>; Equal Pay (Northern Ireland) Act 1970: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/apni/1970/32/contents>

14 Ministry of Education and Research website, accessed 14 August 2014: <http://www.government.se/sb/d/2063>.

15 Gender equality pages, OFMdfM website, accessed 14 August 2014: <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/index/equality-and-strategy/equality-human-rights-social-change/gender-equality.htm>.

16 Parental Leave Act 1995: <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/10/49/85/f16b785a.pdf>.

17 Equality Ombudsman website, accessed 15 August 2014: <http://www.do.se/en/About-the-Equality-Ombudsman/>.

18 Equality Commission website, accessed 15 August 2014: <http://www.equalityni.org/Home>

19 'Gender Equality in Sweden', official Sweden website, accessed 15 August 2014: <https://sweden.se/society/gender-equality-in-sweden/>.

20 'Abortion: Justice Minister David Ford to consult on changing NI's laws', *BBC News* 5 December 2013: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-25230152>.

21 'David Ford: NI abortion consultation 'ready by autumn'', *BBC News* 18 August 2014: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-28833136>.

22 Penal Code, Chapter 4, Section 4a: <http://www.government.se/sb/d/3926/a/27777>

23 Ministry of Justice (2013), *Domestic Violence & Child Abuse Offences*, London: MoJ, pp.4-6: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/la-private-matters/dv-ca-offences.pdf>.

24 Family Homes and Domestic Violence (Northern Ireland) Order 1998: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1998/1071/contents/made>.

- **Act Prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services** Since 1999 it has been illegal to pay for casual sexual relations in Sweden²⁵, which criminalises the purchaser in a prostitution arrangement rather than the prostitute. In Northern Ireland, there has been debate around the criminalisation of the purchase of sex in relation to the passage of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 2013²⁶.
- **Public childcare** Sweden has a universal public childcare system, capped at an affordable rate, and free pre-school from age three, which has been regarded as a factor in Sweden having the highest rate of female labour market participation in Europe²⁷. Seventy per cent of all 1 – 5 year olds attend municipal pre-school provision and a further 17% under private arrangement²⁸. While there are certain state benefits with regard to childcare and free pre-school provision for a limited number of hours at age three²⁹, there is no universal state childcare system in Northern Ireland, and childcare costs are higher than in other parts of the UK and have been increasing³⁰.

The above is just a brief overview of how gender equality has been attributed to certain factors that combine to influence women's life choices and opportunities in Sweden. In addition, there are cross-cutting factors that contribute to the promotion of gender equality in official policy. These include the following:

- **Gender mainstreaming** A Gender Mainstreaming Support committee of inquiry was appointed in 2005, as part of the governmental gender mainstreaming strategy begun in 2004³¹. In 2011, the Swedish Government adopted an updated gender mainstreaming platform that has five key elements³²:
 - Strategy for gender mainstreaming in the Government Offices,
 - A development programme for government agencies,
 - Support for gender mainstreaming at regional level,
 - Quality assurance of the development of gender mainstreaming in municipalities and county councils, and
 - Initiatives to gather and share experience and knowledge about practical implementation of gender mainstreaming

The current Strategy for the Work with Gender Mainstreaming in the Government Offices³³ is overseen by a Division for Gender, with a gender coordinator at each ministry and

25 'Legislation on the purchase of sexual services', Government Offices of Sweden website, accessed 15 August 2014: <http://www.government.se/sb/d/4096/a/119861>.

26 Research and Information Service Bill Paper 122/13 *Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill 2013* 4 October 2013: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2013/justice/12213.pdf>.

27 'Sweden: Successful reconciliation of work and family life', European Platform for Investing in Children, accessed 15 August 2014: http://europa.eu/epic/countries/sweden/index_en.htm.

28 Statistics Sweden (2014), *Women and Men in Sweden: facts and Figures 2014*, Örebro: Statistics Sweden, p.41.

29 'Childcare benefits, tax credits and other help for working parents', NI Direct website, accessed 15 August 2014: <http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/information-and-services/parents/childcare/childcare-benefits-tax-credits-and-other-help-for-working-parents.htm>

30 Rachel Dennison (2013) *Northern Ireland Childcare Cost Survey 2013*, Lisburn: Employers for Childcare: <http://vouchers.employersforchildcare.org/media/full-childcare-cost-survey-report-2013.pdf>.

31 Gunilla Sterner and Helene Biller (2007), *Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Member States: Progress, Obstacles and Experiences at Governmental Level*, Stockholm: Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, p.34: <http://www.government.se/sb/d/8600/a/75096>.

32 'Gender Mainstreaming', Government Offices of Sweden website, accessed 18 August 2014: <http://www.government.se/sb/d/4096/a/125215>.

33 Strategi för arbetet med jämställdhetsintegrering i Regeringskansliet, from the European Institute for Gender Equality website, accessed 18 August 2014: <http://eige.europa.eu/content/strategi-f%C3%B6r-arbetet-med-j%C3%A4mst%C3%A4lldhetsintegrering-i-regeringskansliet>.

annual action plans. From 2014, the Swedish Government took over funding of the multi-agency website 'Include Gender'³⁴, which provides information and resources for gender mainstreaming, and official guidance is provided for gender mainstreaming in public authorities³⁵. Gender mainstreaming is included in the Gender Equality Strategy in Northern Ireland³⁶ and OFMdfM has published a Gender Impact Assessment Handbook for the implementation of gender mainstreaming in policy development³⁷.

- **Gender equality** in policy-proofing Sweden has long been regarded as having a well-integrated system for gender equality appraisal in policy and legislation development³⁸. Policy-proofing is an integral part of gender mainstreaming in the country. In Northern Ireland, an equality duty is provided for in legislation, where public bodies are required to have due regard for the impact of policies on a range of equality grounds, including between women and men³⁹.
- **Gender budgeting** The Swedish Government allocates funds specifically to gender equality in the annual budget. The 2014 budget indicates that SEK 252 million⁴⁰ has been allocated to gender equality policy for this year⁴¹. The Northern Ireland Executive does not normally specify budgetary allocations to gender equality policy.

It has been suggested that certain factors have contributed to the success of gender mainstreaming in Sweden. These include⁴²:

- Structures for co-ordination in each ministry
- Training to use mainstreaming tools
- Clear entry points, via co-ordinators, for the Gender Equality Division to each ministry
- Policy documentation on mainstreaming, such as guidance and toolkits
- Long-term plans, annual action plans and ministry-specific action plans

In many respects, however, there are areas where gender equality in Sweden has been regarded as less than satisfactory. For example:

- Women's entrepreneurship is less extensive than that of men and it reflects segregation of the workforce by gender⁴³
- There are fewer women than men on company boards, leading to calls for gender quotas⁴⁴

34 Include Gender website: <http://www.includegender.org/>

35 Gender Mainstreaming Support Committee (2007), *Gender Mainstreaming Manual*, SOU 2007:15, Stockholm: Swedish Government Official Reports: <http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/08/19/82/3532cd34.pdf>.

36 Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (2006), *Gender Equality Strategy*, Belfast: OFMdfM, pp.26-28

37 Marie Crawley and Louise O'Meara (2004), *Gender Impact Assessment Handbook*, Belfast: OFMdfM: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/handbook1.pdf>.

38 Fiona McKay and Kate Bilton (2001), *Equality Proofing Procedures in Drafting Legislation: International Comparisons*, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive, p.26.

39 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/contents>.

40 Approximately £21.6 million.

41 'Objectives and budget for gender equality policy', Government Offices of Sweden website, accessed 18 August 2014: <http://www.government.se/sb/d/4096/a/171700>.

42 Gunilla Sterner and Helene Biller (2007), *Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Member States: Progress, Obstacles and Experiences at Governmental Level*, Appendix 4: in-Depth Study of Sweden, p.39, Stockholm: Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality.

43 Gunhild Wallin (2012), 'Women's businesses mirror gender segregated labour market', *Nordic Labour Journal* 8 March 2012.

44 Lenita Freidenvall and Hanna Hallonsten (2013), 'Why Not Corporate Gender Quotas in Sweden?', *Representation* 49(4), 467-485.

- Men predominate in management positions and this is reported to affect how a whole organisation operates⁴⁵
- Women take far more parental leave than men⁴⁶
- There are major differences between women's and men's lifetime earnings, attributed to different early life choices⁴⁷
- Significant measures for gender equality are undermined by patterns of relationship formation in society and family choices⁴⁸

A selection of statistics relating to gender and power is at Appendix 1, with comparative figures for Northern Ireland.

45 Gunhild Wallin (2014), 'Gender equality at the top influences the entire organisation', *Nordic Labour Journal*, 5 March 2014.

46 Ann-Zofie Duvander (2014), 'How Long Should Parental Leave Be? Attitudes to Gender Equality, Family and Work as Determinants of Women's and Men's Parental Leave in Sweden', *Journal of Family Issues* 35(7), 909-926.

47 Gunhild Wallin (2013), 'Workplace equality depends on early life choices', *Nordic Labour Journal* 8 March 2013.

48 Bo Rothstein (2012), 'The Reproduction of Gender Inequality: A Causal Mechanism Approach', *Gender, Work and Organisation* 19(3), 324-344.

3 Women and Political Participation in Sweden

Sweden has the fourth highest representation of women in a national legislature in the world (45%)⁴⁹. The Northern Ireland Assembly has 22 women (20%). At local government level, 44% of councillors in Sweden are female – the highest rate in a survey of 30 European countries (see Appendix 2). Councils in Northern Ireland are 24% female and 25% of those elected to the shadow councils to replace the existing 26 councils are women.

The proportions of women elected to public office are roughly in proportion to those nominated for election: 44% for the last general election to the Riksdag, 42% to municipal councils and 45% to county councils⁵⁰. This pattern is also broadly true of elections in Northern Ireland: 17%⁵¹ of candidates in the Northern Ireland Assembly election in 2011⁵² and 24% of candidates for the local council elections in 2014 are women⁵³.

This section briefly reviews the involvement of women in politics in Sweden and considers some of the explanations for the relatively high rate of participation.

The Political System in Sweden

While there are significant variations, the ‘Nordic model’ or ‘Scandinavian model’ of politics has been described as being distinct from political systems elsewhere in Europe, and described as⁵⁴:

a blend of compromise politics, local government autonomy and corporatism, where party competition is nested with political and social co-operation.

With this in mind, features of these political systems are large welfare states with strong democracies and a comparatively high rate of voter trust in political actors⁵⁵. Consequences of this include a comparatively high rate of political party participation and high voter turnout: regularly in excess of 80% in Sweden since the 1990s, without compulsory voting⁵⁶.

In Sweden, there are 349 seats in the Riksdag, of which 310 are elected through proportional representation (PR) from the 29 constituencies and 39 are ‘adjustment seats’. The ‘adjustment seats’ are used to achieve a proportional distribution of seats between parties in the country as a whole, where patterns of constituency votes may upset this balance. A party must obtain a threshold of 4% to gain seats in parliament⁵⁷.

While essentially a PR party list system, Sweden also has ‘weak’ preferential voting. Voters have an option to vote for a candidate on the party list and where this vote exceeds 8%, this

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- 49 Women in National Parliaments database, Inter-Parliamentary Union, accessed 18 August 2014: <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>.
- 50 Statistics Sweden (2014), *Women and Men in Sweden: facts and Figures 2014*, Örebro: Statistics Sweden, p.94.
- 51 Twenty women were elected in 2011 (19%), but there have been two more female co-options than male since then, bringing the total to 22 (20%).
- 52 See Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14 *Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly*, 3 September 2013, p.8: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf.
- 53 See Research and Information Service Briefing Note 48/14 *Candidates for the 2014 Elections in Northern Ireland by Gender*, 1 May 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/4814.pdf.
- 54 Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson (2008), ‘The Nordic Countries: Compromise and Corporatism in the Welfare State’, in Josep Colomer (ed.) *Comparative European Politics*, London: Routledge, p.248.
- 55 Åsa Bengtsson, Kasper Hansen, Ólafur Har-arson, Hanne Narud and Henrik Oscarsson (2014), *The Nordic Voter: Myths of Exceptionalism*, Colchester: ECPR Press, pp.16, 64.
- 56 Jan-Erik Lane and Svante Ersson (2008), ‘The Nordic Countries: Compromise and Corporatism in the Welfare State’, in Josep Colomer (ed.) *Comparative European Politics*, London: Routledge, p.254.
- 57 ‘The distribution of seats in the Riksdag’, Riksdag website, accessed 19 August 2014: <http://www.riksdagen.se/en/How-the-Riksdag-works/Democracy/Elections/The-distribution-of-seats-in-the-Riksdag/>.
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has the effect of altering the position of an individual candidate on a party list⁵⁸. This means that the electorate has the power to override where a political party places a candidate on the list by promoting an individual to a higher position. The distribution of seats is by a proportional Sainte Laguë formula.

While PR systems are considered more conducive to women's representation, mainly due to the ease of managing provisions for women on party lists, there is no quota in law for a balance of representation between the sexes.

Parliamentary Procedures

When Brigitta Dahl became Speaker of the Riksdag in 1995 she invited female representatives from each of the parliamentary party factions to form a Reference Group for Gender Equality to discuss how they could together make the best use of the higher representation of women. Since then, the Reference Group has worked towards a range of changes to parliamentary procedure, such as sitting times, childcare facilities, a plenary-free month and a gender equality plan for the parliament⁵⁹.

In 2004, the Riksdag commissioned a working group to look into improving gender equality and this group published a 15-point action plan in 2005. This consisted of the following proposed actions⁶⁰:

1. **A gender programme for the Riksdag** – A programme is to be developed for each mandate to set out how to increase gender equality in political life with a particular aim of improving qualitative equality, so that political participation is equal regardless of gender
2. **Responsibility** – The Director of the Riksdag will be responsible for the drafting of the gender programme and, once approved by the Riksdag management board, its implementation
3. **Seminars for committee chairs, etc.** – Seminars are to be held, at least twice in a mandate, for committee chairs, clerks and other key individuals to discuss parliamentary and committee work, culture, the role of the chair, etc., to include raising awareness of behaviour and behavioural patterns
4. **Panel of Members** – Formed from Riksdag Members, preferably 35 in number, the panel would be a focus for communication of issues and to carryout service surveys, etc.
5. **Surveys and interviews with departing Members** – Information is to be gathered from Members to gain insights into issues regarding how the parliamentary system works
6. **Research, etc.** – Research is to examine the work of the Riksdag from a gender perspective
7. **Sex-disaggregated statistics** – The Riksdag's website is to be developed with gender statistics
8. **Support for Members who consider themselves adversely affected** – Professional counselling and advice is to be made available to those Members who have been mistreated
9. **Induction for new Members** – The induction process is to have a focus on informal learning of the processes of the Riksdag

58 Åsa Bengtsson, Kasper Hansen, Ólafur Har-arson, Hanne Narud and Henrik Oscarsson (2014), *The Nordic Voter: Myths of Exceptionalism*, Colchester: ECPR Press, p.87.

59 Lenita Freidenvall (2013), 'Sweden: Step by Step – Women's Inroads into Parliamentary Politics' in Drude Dahlerup and Monique Leyenaar (eds), *Breaking Male Dominance in Old Democracies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.116.

60 Arbetsgruppen för en Jämställd Riksdag (2005) *15 FÖRSLAG FÖR EN JÄMSTÄLLD RIKSDAG*, Stockholm: Riksdagstryckeriet: <http://data.riksdagen.se/fil/589F89BB-4755-4A9B-87DD-D9262F344976>.

10. **Treatment issues in work plans, etc.** – The possibility of including issues around treatment is to be considered for committee work plans, etc.
11. **Meeting places for party groups** – The secretariat is to provide accommodation for party groups to meet to discuss gender issues, etc., and committee staff may attend these sessions
12. **An equality directive for all internal investigations, etc.** – The results of any internal investigations should consider implications for gender equality and there should be a gender balance of investigating staff
13. **Committee work plans, etc.** – Members' family situations are to be taken into account when compiling committee work plans
14. **International Women's Day** – Attention is to be drawn to gender issues especially on International Women's Day (8 March) each year through the laying of gender-related reports before the Riksdag on or near that day, etc.
15. **Facts and figures** – Members are to receive the publication *På tal om kvinnor och män* which contains statistics on women and men in Sweden

The Riksdag has in place a number of provisions to facilitate Members with caring responsibilities, including a commitment where possible not to meet during major school holidays, having 'plenary-free' weeks and childcare facilities⁶¹.

Gender is also taken into account in the scrutiny of the executive. For example, the Committee for Finance examines the annual budget for gender equality aspects as a matter of course. To assist with this, the annual Budget Bill has an appendix indicating gender disaggregation of expenditure⁶². For example, Appendix 3 to the Budget Bill 2014 includes information on how the budget contributes to government targets on gender equality⁶³.

Beyond numerical representation in parliament in general, participation in key deliberative processes of the legislature is an indicator of the extent of substantive representation. One of these deliberative venues is the parliamentary committee. Table 1 summarises the gender distribution of committee members.

Table 1: Riksdag Committee Membership by Gender

Committee	% Women
Housing/Interior	59%
Health and Welfare	59%
Education	59%
Labour market	47%
Industry	47%
International	47%
Justice	41%

61 Contribution by Sweden to the FEMM Committee of the European Parliament on provisions for women's representation, 2011: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/femm/dv/contribution_sweden_/contribution_sweden_en.pdf.

62 Inter-Parliamentary Union (2011), *Gender-Sensitive Parliaments*, Geneva: IPU, p.35: <http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf>.

63 Budgetpropositionen för 2014: Förslag till statens budget för 2014, finansplan och skattefrågor, Bilaga 3: <http://www.regeringen.se/content/1/c6/22/37/09/c4d88fcf.pdf>.

Committee	% Women
Culture	41%
Environment and agriculture	41%
Social Insurance	41%
Traffic	41%
Constitution	29%
Taxation	29%
Finance	24%
Defence	18%
Total	42%

There are two things of note here: Firstly, the percentage of women in committee membership (42%) is lower than that of the total representation in the Riksdag (45%), meaning women are under-represented in a key deliberative forum. Secondly, there is a certain degree of gender segregation in the nature of committees, for example, women being in the majority in committees dealing with housing, health and education, whereas men predominate in committees dealing with issues such as defence and finance⁶⁴.

Political Parties

Eight political parties were represented in the Riksdag in the 2010-2014 mandate. Their number and sex distribution are given in Table 2⁶⁵.

Table 2: Percentages of Women in the Riksdag by Party

Party	Women	Men	% Women
Left party	11	8	58%
Green Party	14	11	56%
Social Democrats	54	58	48%
Moderate Party	51	56	48%
Liberal Party	10	14	42%
Christian Democrats	7	12	37%
Centre Party	7	16	30%
Sweden Democrats	3	17	15%
Total	157	192	45%

While there are no legal quotas, three parties have some kind of arrangement for a minimum number of women on party lists for Riksdag elections. Table 3 summarises these arrangements⁶⁶.

64 Figures from Statistics Sweden (2014), *Women and Men in Sweden: facts and Figures 2014*, Örebro: Statistics Sweden, p.94.

65 Figures from Statistics Sweden (2014), *Women and Men in Sweden: facts and Figures 2014*, Örebro: Statistics Sweden, p.93.

66 From 'Sweden' on the Quota Project website, accessed 19 August 2014: <http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=197>.

Table 3: Provisions for the Representation of Women in Parties

Party	Provision
Social Democratic Party	Zipper system: sexes alternate on party lists
Left Party	50% quota for women on party lists
Green Party	50% gender quota on party lists, plus or minus one person

In addition to these party rules, other parties have various policies or recommendations for equal representation, although not enforceable in the same way. Taken alone, the three parties with rules regarding candidate quotas do not have a majority of seats in parliament, so the measure cannot be considered the single causal factor for high levels of women's representation.

At the time of writing, there are two female party leaders⁶⁷ and seven male party leaders in the parties represented in the Riksdag. It has been argued that, despite the increased representation of women in politics, men still disproportionately predominate in leadership positions⁶⁸.

While not represented in the Riksdag in the 2010-2014 mandate, there is a feminist party, Feminist Initiative⁶⁹, which gained representation in the elections to the European Parliament in 2014⁷⁰. This party has a female leader (Gudrun Schyman) and the only other party of note, the Piratpartiet (Pirate Party), also with no seats in the Riksdag, has a female party leader (Anna Troberg)⁷¹.

Details of the parties represented in the Riksdag in 2014 are at Appendix 3.

Explanations for the Advancement of Women in Politics in Sweden

The level of representation of women in politics has attracted a range of studies to try to explain the promotion of women in public life. Explanations include the following:

- The traditional left-right politics in Sweden focussed on equality on the basis of individual rights and social-economic rights, however, a gender-aware 'third way' developed through a combination of alliances between elected women, women in government, women in parties, women in community groups, social movements and ad hoc groups campaigning for representation⁷²
- Increased numbers of women generated momentum through a 'politics of presence', where women have represented and promoted the interests of women better than men⁷³
- A 'discursive turn' in Swedish politics took place, driven by a two-fold approach in arguments for gender equality: redefining women's issues as gender equality issues and framing women's equality as a demand for greater democracy, but these demands are made in a context of the increased presence of women in institutions⁷⁴

67 The Green Party has two party leaders, one male and one female.

68 Johanna Rikne and Olle Folke (2012), 'Kvinnor i politiken och män vid makten? Könskvotering och konkurrens i svenska kommuner', *Ekonomisk Debatt* 40(1), 16-21.

69 Feministiskt Initiativ website: <http://gamla.feministisktinitiativ.se/engelska.php>.

70 'Feminism is about competition', *The Local* 8 August 2014: <http://www.thelocal.se/20140808/feminism-is-about-competition>.

71 'Who's who in politics?', *The Local* 5 September 2014: <http://www.thelocal.se/20140905/swedish-party-leaders>.

72 Maud Eduards (1991), 'Toward a Third Way: Women's Politics and Welfare Policies in Sweden', *Social Research* 58(3), 677-706.

73 Lena Wängnerud (2000), 'Testing the Politics of Presence: Women's Representation in the Swedish Riksdag', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 23(1), 67-91.

74 Diane Sainsbury (2004), 'Women's Political Representation in Sweden: Discursive Politics and Institutional Presence', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 27(1), 65-88.

- Rather than traditional motivational factors attributed to political movements, the pressure for women's equality was driven by women themselves in Sweden, who had an interest in improving the society around them, and collective mobilisation by women on issues specific to women's advancement⁷⁵
- Pressure placed in political parties by women's movements within parties and outside parties led to special measures by the parties themselves to increase the number of women representatives⁷⁶
- Factors contributing to the participation of women have been the integration of women into party structures and political will, which are complemented by relatively generous parental leave and have operated in a context of favourable institutional, socio-economic and cultural factors⁷⁷

In general, there are certain factors that recur among explanations for the level of participation of women in politics in Sweden. These can be summarised as follows:

1. A broad social tradition of participation in Sweden
2. A strong women's movement for participation driving a gender equality agenda
3. The political will for gender equality within government, political parties and the general public
4. A social context of state provision of support to enable women to participate, such as childcare and parental leave
5. Party policies as mechanisms for bringing more women into politics
6. The presence of women in public life adding momentum to generate more participation

These factors inter-relate to reinforce each other in maintaining a process of women's participation which becomes the norm.

75 Per Adman (2009), 'The Puzzle of Gender-equal Political Participation in Sweden: The Importance of Norms and Mobilisation', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 32(3), 315-336.

76 Lenita Freidenvall (2013), 'Sweden: Step by Step – Women's Inroads into Parliamentary Politics', in Drude Dahlerup and Monique Leyenaar (eds.), *Breaking Male Dominance in Old Democracies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 97-123.

77 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and development (2014), *Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries*, Paris: OECD, p.44.

4 Women and the 2014 General Election in Sweden

Elections to the Riksdag, municipal and councils take place every four years on the second Sunday in September. This paper focusses on the election to the Riksdag on 14 September 2014.

To stand for election, a candidate must be nominated by a political party. There is no requirement to register the name of a party, but doing so protects the party name. The parties themselves place ballot papers in the polling station, which are free to parties which gained 1% of the vote in the previous election, and these ballot papers either have the party name and a list of candidates or just a party name. Blank ballot papers are also available to the polling station.

The voter takes a ballot paper with the name of a party or a blank paper and writes the name of a party on it (yellow for elections to the Riksdag, blue for county council elections and white for municipal or European elections). The voter may then choose to nominate individual candidates (preference voting). If the party in question has not provided a list of candidates, the voter may write the name of a candidate on the ballot paper.⁷⁸

Candidate Selection

Candidates by party and gender are presented in Table 4. There is no adjustment made for position on the list. There are some examples of alternating male and female on party lists, but generally they are a mixture of male and female candidates without any specific pattern or order.

The table gives an indication of how the parties have prioritised the representation of women. Generally, parties have fielded female candidates roughly in proportion of women currently in the Riksdag, although the Christian Democrats, Centre Party and Sweden Democrats have fielded significantly more female candidates than is reflective of their pre-election representation.

Only the larger parties are included, therefore the total figure for the whole of Sweden – 45% - is not calculated solely from the parties shown in the table. The female candidate count is normally indicative of the number of women expected to be elected.

Table 4: Candidates in the 2014 Riksdag Election by Party and Gender⁷⁹

Party	% Female
Left party	53.3%
Green Party	50.7%
Social Democrats	49.7%
Liberal Party	43.6%
Christian Democrats	42.9%
Moderate Party	42.1%
Centre Party	44.1%
Sweden Democrats	30.2%
Sweden	45.2%

⁷⁸ Election Authority (2014), *Elections in Sweden*, Stockholm: Election Authority, pp.6-10: http://www.val.se/sprak/engelska/Elections_in_Sweden_2014_juli_webb.pdf.

⁷⁹ 'Val till riksdagen - Ålder och kön: Kandidater', Valmyndigheten website, accessed 22 September 2014: <http://www.val.se/val/val2014/alkon/R/rike/alderkon.html#kandalkon>.

Party Policy

The election manifestos of the main parties for the 2014 election are discussed here in relation to the representation of women and gender equality. The Moderates, Centre Party, Liberal Party and Christian Democrats are combined as the centre-right electoral coalition Alliance.

Specific references to measures relating to gender equality in manifestos are as follows:

■ Social Democrats⁸⁰:

- Increase in female professors in higher education (p.20)
- Equal rights and responsibilities for women and men in paid work and unpaid housework (p.21)
- Reduction of the pay gap between women and men (p.21)
- Equal access to a good working environment and full time employment for women and men (p.21)
- Access to high quality welfare, especially for women, who bear most responsibility for child and family care (p.33)
- Abolition of tax for pensions up to the average rate for female pensioners (p.39)
- Actions against violence against women (p.41)
- More support for abused women (p.41)
- Improved clear-up rate for sex crimes (p.41)
- Review of sexual violence laws, including increased penalties (p.41)
- Criminalisation of the purchase of sex abroad (p.41)

■ Alliance⁸¹:

- Measures in support of women's health (p.18)
- Women and men to have equal rights and power to shape their own lives (p.34)
- Tax credits that benefit women (p.34)
- Career advancement and better pay in female-dominated professions (p.34)
- Equality bonus for parents to take equal amounts of parental leave (p.35)
- Develop a tool for employers to identify factors that affect different pressures on women and men at work (p.35)
- Work to prevent women leaving employment early due to work-related issues (p.35)
- Investigation of options for dividing pensions more equally among women and men (p.35)
- Conduct of an inquiry into mental health issues for young women (p.48)
- Electronic tagging for more cases of restraining orders (p.89)
- Evaluation of the impact of punishment for crimes against women and consideration of increased sentences (p.89)
- Additional funds for county boards to tackle crimes against women and children, prostitution and human trafficking (p.90)
- Action against forced marriage (p.90)
- Secure funding for refuges for women and children (p.90)
- Continued support of programmes aimed at combating violence against women (p.90)

80 Socialdemokraterna (2014), *Kära Framtid, Valmanifest för ett Bättre Sverige*, Stockholm: SD: http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/upload/val/Val2014/valloften/Socialdemokraternas_Valmanifest.pdf.

81 Alliansen (2014), *Vy Bygger Sverige: Alliansens Vallmanifest 2014-2018*, Stockholm: Alliansen: http://www.moderat.se/sites/default/files/attachments/vi_bygger_sverige_-_alliansens_valmanifest_2014-2018.pdf.

■ Green Party⁸²:

- Policy based on an anti-racism feminism that acknowledges how power systems interact (p.13)
- Equal pay, right to full time work and breakdown of gender segregation in the labour market (p.13)
- Investment in improving female-dominated professions (p.13)
- Work to reduce mental health illness for women (p.13)
- Parental leave to be divided into three equal parts: for the mother, the father and the third period for either parent or a close relative (p.13)
- More prevention of men's violence against women, more investment in women's shelters, any form of sex without consent to be made illegal, mandatory training on sex crime for judges (p.14)
- Investment in follow-on accommodation from women's shelters (p.14)
- Quotas for women on boards of listed companies (p.14)
- Focus on school health and child and adolescent psychiatry, which particularly affects young girls (p.14)
- Introduction of legislation to ban sexist advertising (p.14)
- Introduction of legislation on gender mainstreaming for all public bodies and application of a gender perspective to all policies (p.14)
- Focus on women's health and maternity care (p.15)
- Repeal of the Aliens Act, which locks women without residency in abusive relationships (p.19)
- Assurance of women's participation in all peace processes in accordance with UN Resolution 1325 (p.22)
- Hours and conditions in male-dominated industries should also be agreed in industries dominated by women (p.24)
- Girls' and women's sports and interests should have the same conditions as those of boys and men (p.26)

■ Sweden Democrats⁸³:

- Improve the living conditions of older people, predominantly women (p.6)
- Work towards a Sweden where men and women have the same rights and value (p.17)
- Work towards a Sweden where people can break out of traditional gender roles, but also live in such a way if they choose to do so (p.17)
- Improvement of working conditions in the female-dominated public sector (p.17)
- Enhanced maternity pay (p.17)
- Increased support for women's shelters and special shelters for victims of honour violence (p.17)
- Higher degree of control over the Swedish contribution to UN missions, including increased support to persecuted Christians, women and LGBT people (p.21)
- Increased child maintenance (p.22)

82 Miljöpartiet de Gröna (2014), Valmanifest, Stockholm: MP: <http://www.mp.se/politik/valmanifest2014>.

83 Sverigedemokraterna (2014), Vi Väljer Valfärd! Stockholm: SD: <http://sverigedemokraterna.se/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Valmanifest.pdf>.

Programmes to improve the lives of women as a group are common features of all the manifestos. Such references are less prevalent in the manifesto for the Sweden Democrats, which also had the lowest representation in the Riksdag in the last mandate (15%). The Sweden Democrats have been described as a ‘radical right populist party’, which has tried to blend old nationalist ideas about traditional roles with a new nationalist discourse of Sweden as the most gender-equal nation in the world, but it has been argued that gender equality is an uneasy fit with nationalist ideology⁸⁴.

In the other manifestos, the following common themes emerge:

- Equality in employment, including measures for equal pay, equal working environments for women and men and career advancement for women
- Improved welfare for women, including tax and pension benefits
- Options for a more equal distribution of parental leave
- Measures for women’s health, particularly mental health and maternity care
- Protection of women from violence and improved provision for victims

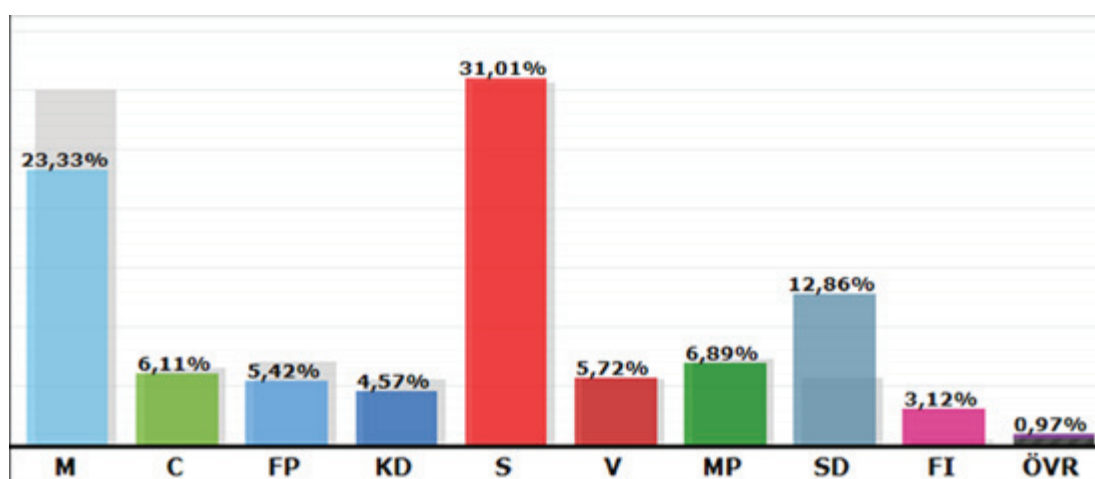
These proposals enhance what may be regarded as fairly comprehensive existing provisions. However, there are some more innovative proposals, such as the criminalisation of the purchase of sex abroad (Social Democrats), quotas for women on company boards and legislation to ban sexist language in the media (Green Party).

The language of political parties also suggests commitment to gender equality. For example, the Green Party manifesto has a section entitled ‘Feminism and Equality’ and the Liberal Party goes as far as to state that it is a ‘feminist party’⁸⁵.

Election Results

Results from the election count indicate that the eight parties currently in the Riksdag have been returned. The Feminist Initiative has failed to reach the 4% threshold. The Social Democrats have the most votes, roughly on a par with the previous mandate. The biggest changes have been losses for the Moderates with a corresponding gain to the right wing Sweden Democrats.

Figure 1: Results for the Election to the Riksdag 14 September 2014⁸⁶



84 Ann Towns, Erika Karlsson and Joshua Eyre (2014), ‘The Equality Conundrum: Gender and Nation in the Ideology of the Sweden Democrats’, *Party Politics* 20(2), 237-247.

85 ‘Feminism utan socialism’, Liberal Party website, accessed 17 September 2014: <http://www.folkpartiet.se/politik/hjartefragor/jamstalldhet/>.

86 ‘Val till riksdagen – Valnatt’, Valmyndigheten website, accessed 22 September 2014: <http://www.val.se/val/val2014/valnatt/R/rike/index.html>.

The elections returned 197 men and 152 women, making the new Riksdag 44% female⁸⁷, a decline of 1% on the previous mandate. Table 5 gives the results by party and gender.

Table 5: Women Elected to the Riksdag 2014 by Party⁸⁸

Party	% Female
Left party	57.1%
Green Party	50%
Social Democrats	47.1%
Liberal Party	26.3%
Christian Democrats	37.5%
Moderate Party	52.4%
Centre Party	42.9%
Sweden Democrats	22.5%
Sweden	43.6%

As can be seen, there is significant variation in the representation of women according to party (23% to 57%). Also of note is, if compared with Table 4 above depicting candidates by party, there is significant variation in the correlation between candidates and elected representatives, suggesting that the position on the party list is significant, rather than having a certain proportion of women.

⁸⁷ 'Den nya riksdagen efter valet', Riksdag website, accessed 22 September 2014:
<http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Start/Press-startsida/pressmeddelanden/201314/Den-nya-riksdagen-efter-valet/>.

⁸⁸ 'Invalida ledamöter 2014', Riksdag website, accessed 22 September 2014:
<http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/ledamoter-partier/Invalida-ledamoter-2014/>.

5 Analysis: Factors Contributing to the Higher Representation of Women in Politics in Sweden

This section briefly discusses provisions in Sweden in the context of measures suggested internationally for the representation of women in politics. For the purposes of this paper, a six-step action plan for gender equality in elected office⁸⁹, prepared for the Organisation for Co-operation and Security in Europe (OSCE), is used as a framework for comparison.

Constitutional Rights

As highlighted above, Sweden has comprehensive statutory provision which provides for the protection of women from discrimination, generous parental leave, universal public childcare and legislation designed to protect women's autonomy and dignity, such as abortion rights and provisions against gender-based violence and exploitation through prostitution. These rights are subject to statutory oversight by government by the Minister for Gender Equality and through the independent Equality Ombudsman.

In terms of government policy, gender mainstreaming, gender-proofing of policies and gender budgeting contribute to overall measures for including gender equality in all areas of government business.

Electoral System

Sweden has a proportional list system for elections, which is regarded as the most conducive to gender equality in political representation, as it allows for the easy application of gender quotas by parties.

Legal Quotas

Sweden does not have legal quotas for political candidates.

Party Rules and Recruitment Procedures

Most of the larger political parties practice forms of positive discrimination or overtly espouse commitments to women's equal representation in politics. This includes the use of quotas in some parties, but also the election manifestos of all the major parties express a commitment to gender equality, with most putting forward a range of measures to implement gender equality principles.

Capacity Development

Women organise within political parties in Sweden as well as in the Riksdag, such as in the Reference Group for Gender Equality, and political parties actively support women's representation. In addition, women in politics in Sweden are supported by women's groups in the community, providing moral and political support to women in public office.

Parliamentary Reform

Measures within the Riksdag support the presence of women, such as family-friendly sitting times, childcare provision, gender equality principles applied in the work of the legislature and a commitment to supporting women representatives.

Sweden does not necessarily have all the processes in place that are considered conducive to increasing the political representation of women, as there are no legal quotas for election candidates. However, what appears to be more important in the presence of women in politics is the general context of gender equality throughout Swedish society. Also, the

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Pippa Norris and Mona Lena Krook (2011), *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, Warsaw: OSCE: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/78432>.

presence of greater numbers of women appears to have a momentum effect that generates greater representation.

This context of general gender equality recognises the need for further measures to improve women's representation: Sweden's women political representatives have never reached 50% of the Riksdag and Sweden has never had a female Prime Minister. This theme can be seen in the political manifestos summarised above, which contain proposals for further equality measures. Therefore, despite Sweden's claim to be the most gender equal country in the world, it is a work in progress.

Appendix 1: Women and Men in Sweden and Northern Ireland⁹⁰

	% Female in Sweden	% Female in Northern Ireland
Government Ministers	54%	27%
State Secretaries	37%	0%
Senior Judges	37%	0%
Managers	36%	37%
Public Appointments: Chairs	37%	19%
Public Appointments: Members	47%	33%
Self employed	36%	24%
University vice chancellors/directors	52%	0%
School principals	66%	56%
Schoolteachers	76%	76%
Heads of state health and social care organisations	57%	33%
State health and social care staff	83%	81%

Note: Figures have only been given where there is some degree of equivalence in available statistics.

90

Figures for Sweden are taken from Statistics Sweden (2014), Women and Men in Sweden: facts and Figures 2014, Örebro: Statistics Sweden. Figures for Northern Ireland are from Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 79/14 Who Runs Northern Ireland? A Summary of Statistics Relating to Gender and Power, 19 June 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/7914.pdf.

Appendix 2: Local Government Representation in 30 European Countries⁹¹

Country	% Women in Local Government	Country	% Women in Local Government
Sweden	43.2%	Bulgaria	25.3%
Spain	40.2%	Poland	25%
Iceland	39%	Netherlands	24.5%
Norway	38.5%	Lithuania	24.3%
Belgium	37.7%	Austria	23.3%
Finland	36.7%	Switzerland	22.4%
France	33.9%	Luxembourg	21.9%
Denmark	31%	Slovenia	21.6%
Latvia	30.5%	Slovakia	21.5%
Portugal	30.4%	Italy	19%
Estonia	29.7%	Malta	17%
UK	29%	Ireland	16.1%
Hungary	28.5%	Greece	14.4%
Germany	26.9%	Romania	13.9%
Czech Republic	25.5%	Croatia	13%

Appendix 3: Political Parties Represented in the Riksdag 2010- 2014⁹²

Party	Name in English	Website	% Women	Quota?
Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetarparti	Social Democrats	www.socialdemokraterna.se	48%	Zipper
Moderata Samlungspartiet	Moderate Party	www.moderat.se	48%	No
Miljöpartiet de Gröna	Green Party	www.mp.se	56%	50%
Folkpartiet Liberalna	Liberal Party	www.folkpartiet.se	42%	No
Centerpartiet	Centre Party	www.centerpartiet.se	30%	No
Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden Democrats	www.sverigedemokraterna.se	15%	No
Kristdemokraterna	Christian Democrats	www.kristdemokraterna.se	37%	No
Vänsterpartiet	Left Party	www.vansterpartiet.se	58%	50%

91 Figures taken from: Aksel Sundström (2013) Women's Local Political Representation within 30 European Countries: A Comparative Dataset on Regional Figures, Quality of Government Institute Working Paper 2013:18, Gothenberg: University of Gothenberg.

92 Figures for August 2014 prior to the September elections, websites accessed 19 August 2014.

Appendix 4: Political Parties Represented in the Riksdag Following the 2014 General Election

Party	Name in English	% Women
Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetarparti	Social Democrats	47.1%
Moderata Samlungspartiet	Moderate Party	52.4%
Miljöpartiet de Gröna	Green Party	50%
Folkpartiet Liberalna	Liberal Party	26.3%
Centerpartiet	Centre Party	42.9%
Sverigedemokraterna	Sweden Democrats	22.5%
Kristdemokraterna	Christian Democrats	37.5%
Vänsterpartiet	Left Party	57.1%



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

24 October 2014

NIAR 575-14

Michael Potter

Training and Support Programmes for Women in Politics

1 Introduction

On 10 March 2014, the Northern Ireland Assembly resolved¹:

That this Assembly recognises the lack of female representation in politics and public life; further recognises the positive outcomes that result in tackling this inequality, when support and training programmes are put in place to encourage more female candidates to stand in elections; and calls for the introduction of a training and support programme to encourage more female candidates to stand for election.

In the light of this motion and in the context of the Assembly and Executive Review Committee review on Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly², this paper summarises some general principles on training and support programmes for women in politics and gives an overview of some such programmes that have been used in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

1 Private Members' Business, 10 March 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Reports-13-14/10-March-2014/#5>.

2 Assembly and Executive Review Committee, Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.

2 Training and Support for Women in Politics

Training and support initiatives for women in politics have been recommended as a mechanism³ for increasing the representation of women in political life, both for representatives and electoral candidates. Such training and support can take place within legislatures, within political parties or within communities to encourage more women to come forward⁴.

In broad terms, encouragement, specialist training and programmes to locate women as potential candidates are seen as 'positive action' measures that political parties themselves can undertake⁵. Training for women in or entering politics is a 'facilitation measure' to increase the participation of women⁶.

To expand the pool of women available to enter political life, there needs to be access from an early age to work patterns that are conducive to leadership. Specialist training in community-based organisations can be used to develop skills such as⁷:

- Understanding the concerns of women
- Gendered political awareness raising
- Lobbying
- Networking

Once involved in politics, there are certain strategies that have been proposed in order to make an impact⁸:

1. **Learning the Rules** – to understand how the system works and use it more effectively
2. **Using the Rules** – to seize opportunities to participate and to raise issues
3. **Changing the Rules** – to use political capital for further advancement and to help change processes to assist new generations of women to progress

For this to take place, capacity building measures to equip women might include the following⁹:

- Orientation in the legislature
- Understanding party processes
- Networking and mentoring
- Joint as well as women-only training
- Voice projection and public speaking
- How to handle the media

3 For an overview of mechanisms for increasing female political representation see Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14, Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, 3 September 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf.

4 Pippa Norris and Mona Lena Krook (2011), *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, Vienna: OSCE, pp.40-2: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/78432?download=true>.

5 Joni Lovenduski (1993), 'Introduction: The Dynamics of Gender and Party' in Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris (eds) *Gender and Party Politics*, London: Sage, p.9.

6 Pippa Norris and Joni Lovenduski (1993) 'Gender and Party Politics in Britain' in Joni Lovenduski and Pippa Norris (eds) *Gender and Party Politics*, London: Sage, p.53.

7 Nadezhda Shvedova (1998) 'Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament' in Azza Karam (ed) *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: International IDEA, pp.27-8

8 Joni Lovenduski and Azza Karam (1998) 'Women in Parliament: Making a Difference' in Azza Karam (ed) *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*, Stockholm: International IDEA, pp.131-51.

9 Ibid., pp.132-4.

However, there are two points to be borne in mind in relation to programmes designed to facilitate the participation of women in politics. Firstly, such measures are only one approach among many and can be seen as a first step. For example, preferential training and hiring was promoted to increase the participation of women in many areas of public and professional life in France in the 1970s and 1980s after the use of quotas was rejected¹⁰. More recently, more direct measures such as quotas have been employed in France due to the slow rate of progress¹¹. Secondly, capacity building for women in areas where there are barriers to participation assumes women to be the 'problem', when it is the environment that is in need of change¹².

3 Examples of Training and Support Programmes for Women

This section provides an overview of three programmes that have been used to build the capacity of women in politics or entering politics:

- DemocraShe, which has been used in Northern Ireland to provide training and development for female elected representatives
- Women in Local Councils, which has been used to build the capacity of women in both political and staff roles in local councils in Northern Ireland
- Women for Election, which promotes the participation of women in politics in the Republic of Ireland

DemocraShe¹³

DemocraShe was established in 2000 with financial support mainly from the USA, associated with the Vital Voices¹⁴ initiative. The focus was on working with women in political parties and was co-ordinated with election cycles. Initially, training was undertaken separately by political party, with programmes designed to need, usually taking place at weekend and evenings. Around 250 women took part, including around half of female Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs).

Initially, the programme consisted of the following themes, delivered by specialist trainers:

- Confidence building
- Electioneering
- Campaign training
- Fundraising
- Public speaking
- Media training

10 Amy Mazur (1991) 'Agendas and Egalité Professionnelle: Symbolic Policy at Work in France' in Elizabeth Meehan and Selma Sevenhuijsen (eds) *Equality Politics and Gender*, London: Sage, p.131.

11 See Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 86/14 Act for Real Equality between Women and Men – France, 22 September 2014, p.5-6: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/8614.pdf

12 For example, see Michael Potter and Myrtle Hill (2009) 'Women into Non-Traditional Sectors: Addressing Gender Segregation in the Northern Ireland Workforce' in *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 61(2), 133-150

13 Information from Bronagh Hinds, co-ordinator of DemocraShe, 14 October 2014, except where other sources are cited

14 Vital Voices is an NGO committed to promoting women in leadership internationally: <http://www.vitalvoices.org/>

Later the programme developed through learning and content included the following:

- Combining elements, such as confidence building with media training
- Doorstepping
- Videovoxing
- Written press skills
- Scenarios and role plays using actors

Experience of the programme suggested that residential settings were the most effective.

The programme did not continue due to limitations in resources.

Women in Local Councils¹⁵

The Women in Local Councils initiative was launched in January 2006 and comprised a range of events and measures to raise the profile of women in local councils. These included the following¹⁶:

- **Declaration of Principles** – this was to be signed by each of the councils committing them to a principles of equality and the promotion of a culture in which women feel able to participate fully
- **Change Champions** – nomination of Champions within each council, the five main political parties and the Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA)
- **Gender Action Plans** – three templates were developed: for council staff, for political representatives and for political parties
- **Website** – a dedicated information portal was developed to support the initiative¹⁷

Currently, the Local Government Staff Commission facilitates an Equality and Diversity Group. There are Women in Local Councils events each year around International Women's Day and there is a network of party and local government staff equality and diversity champions across the local councils of Northern Ireland¹⁸. The main focus of the initiative is being taken forward within the councils.

Part of the process of nurturing a supply of women into politics was a shadowing/mentoring scheme, where women who had demonstrated an interest in politics through community-based projects (in this case, via Women into Politics and the Women's Resource and Development Agency) were matched with local politicians. Mentors received a one-day training course for effective mentoring and mentees received training on local government structures.

15 Information from Diana Stewart of the Local Government and Staff Commission 23 October 2014, except where other sources are cited

16 Women in Local Councils – making a difference, Annual Report of Activity 1 January 2006 to 31 December 2006

17 At the time of writing, the website address (www.womeninlocalcouncils.org.uk) was no longer available.

18 Equality and Diversity, LGSC website, accessed 17 October 2014: <http://www.lgsc.org.uk/new-initiatives/equality-and-diversity/>.

Women for Election¹⁹

Women for Election was formed in January 2011 and launched on International Women's Day 2012²⁰ as a not-for-profit, non-partisan organisation whose vision is of an Ireland with balanced participation of women and men in political life. Work towards this goal is undertaken through the following initiatives²¹:

- A tailored political training programme
- A network of political women
- Advocacy
- Activities to overcome barriers to women's participation

The training programme works at three levels through the following elements:

1. INFORM²² is a programme that works in universities to engage young women and encourage them to participate in politics through events, workshops, mentoring, a peer group and media campaigns
2. INSPIRE²³ is a one-day programme designed to provide an introduction to political life for interested women, looking at confidence, campaigns and communications
3. EQUIP²⁴ is a three-day residential programme designed to provide practical training for female candidates in the run-up to elections, covering core campaign skills such as:
 - Public speaking
 - Canvassing
 - Campaign planning
 - Campaign management
 - Budgeting
 - Fundraising
 - Media
 - Personal wellbeing and resilience

The initial INSPIRE programme comprised six one-day events each of three modules (confidence, campaigns and communications) in Cork, Galway, Dublin and Limerick, attended by almost 300 participants. The programme involved core skills training and presentations from female politicians on a cross-party basis²⁵.

More recently, the ENGAGE programme has been developed with a focus on the general public, encouraging people to vote, to discuss politics and to consider becoming involved in politics.

19 Information from Michelle O'Donnell Keating of Women for Election 17 October 2014, except where other sources are cited.

20 Women for Election (2013), Women for Election, Dublin: Women for Election, p.3.

21 'About us', Women for Election website: <http://www.womenforelection.ie/about-us/>

22 INFORM, Women for Election website: <http://www.womenforelection.ie/our-programmes/third-level-program/>.

23 INSPIRE, Women for Election website: <http://www.womenforelection.ie/our-programmes/inspire/>.

24 EQUIP, Women Election website: <http://www.womenforelection.ie/our-programmes/equip/>.

25 Vicky Kavanagh and Sharon Pia Hickey (2013), Evaluation of INSPIRE Programme, Dublin: Women for Election.

Beyond the development of skills for politics, which are equally applicable to men and to women, the organisation aims to address specific barriers women face, including the following:

- **Confidence** – It is not that women are unconfident, but women and men have less confidence in the face of new situations. For women, the practice of politics is less familiar because of the predominance of men and therefore need confidence-building measures.
- **De-mystification** – The practice of politics is often associated with a closed circle of knowledge, mostly confined to men. Knowledge and understanding of how politics work creates opportunities for women to participate.
- **Sustaining the pipeline** – Work has to be undertaken at all levels to create interest in politics, encourage women to participate, equip those entering politics and to support them while they are there.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

3 November 2014

NIAR 663-14

Michael Potter

Sitting Times in the Swedish Riksdag

1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee into women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly¹.

At evidence the session on the 7 October 2014 there was discussion on family friendly sitting times in the Swedish Riksdag². This paper summarises procedures in the Riksdag with regard to sitting times and some comparison is made with sitting time procedures in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

2 Sitting Times in the Riksdag and the Northern Ireland Assembly

This section summarises arrangements for sitting times in the Swedish Riksdag and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

1 Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.

2 See Research and Information Service Research Paper 93/14 The Swedish General Election 2014 and the Representation of Women, 1 October 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/9314.pdf.

Sitting Times in the Riksdag

Rules of procedure for the Riksdag are determined by the Riksdag Act, which is periodically updated³.

Article 2 of Chapter 6 of the Riksdag Act states: The Speaker determines the planning of the work of the Chamber and when the Chamber shall meet. Sitting times or dates are not more closely defined in this law.

In general, the Riksdag meets in two sessions⁴:

- Autumn: mid-September to just before Christmas
- Spring: mid-January to the second half of June

The spring session includes a break at Easter⁵.

One week per month is usually set aside for no debates or votes in the chamber. Usually, plenary sittings are on Wednesday and Thursday, but by the end of a parliamentary session, almost all days are occupied⁶.

Planning for parliamentary sessions usually takes into account school holidays when determining plenary-free weeks in the month. Where possible, votes are usually planned in advance, for 4pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays, but they may also be held at other times when they cannot be scheduled ahead of time⁷.

Riksdag sittings are restricted to 23.00 at the latest. After that time, debate is usually suspended until the next day. In the past parliamentary year there were 134 plenary days, of which 51 had sittings beyond 18.00⁸.

Sitting Times in the Northern Ireland Assembly

Procedures of the Northern Ireland Assembly are determined by Standing Orders⁹. Standing Order 10(2) states:

Subject to the authority of the Business Committee to determine the time for commencement of business in plenary session, the sittings of the Assembly shall be arranged as follows –

Monday noon – 6.00 pm

Tuesday 10.30 am – 6.00 pm.

However, Standing Order 10(3) states:

Where business on the Order Paper has not been disposed of by 6.00 pm on Monday, the Speaker may allow business to continue until 7.00 pm or until the outstanding business is completed, whichever is earlier.

But the Monday session may also be extended beyond 7pm through an appropriate motion, as set out in Standing Order 10(3A):

3 Riksdag Act (2014: 801): <http://www.riksdagen.se/Global/dokument/dokument/laws/the-riksdag-act-2014.pdf>.

4 Information from the Riksdag information service 24 October 2014.

5 'A year in the Riksdag', Riksdag website, accessed 3 November 2014: <http://www.riksdagen.se/en/How-the-Riksdag-works/What-does-the-Riksdag-do/A-year-in-the-Riksdag/>

6 Information from the Riksdag information service 24 October 2014.

7 Information from the Riksdag Secretariat 28 October 2014.

8 Information from the Riksdag information service 28 October 2014.

9 Standing Orders of the Northern Ireland Assembly, as at June 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Standing-Orders/Standing-Orders-17-06-2014.pdf>.

Where it appears that Monday's business may not be completed by 7.00 pm, a motion to extend the sitting into the evening may be moved by –

- (a) a member of the Executive Committee (in respect of outstanding Executive Committee Business);
- (b) a member of the Business Committee (in respect of any other outstanding business).

Table 1 indicates the number of sittings of the Northern Ireland Assembly which adjourned after 6.00pm¹⁰.

Table 1: Number of Assembly sittings which adjourned after 6.00pm

Month/ Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
January	Suspension	2	3	1	3	0	1	4
February		4	3	2	8	3	4	5
March		3	3	4	5	3	2	5
April		2	1	2	Dissolution	0	3	3
May	1	2	2	1	0	2	5	1
June (up to July recess)	3	4	3	7	0	5	7	5
July	Summer Recess							
August								
September	1	0	4	1	1	4	3	3
October	4	2	1	1	2	4	3	4
November	2	2	6	3	2	6	4	
December	1	2	1	1	1	0	3	
Total	12	23	27	23	22	27	35	

Standing Order 10(9) states that the Business Office determines dates for recess, with no further stipulation. In practice, recess dates tend to coincide with school holidays, with recesses for Halloween, Christmas, Easter and the summer¹¹.

¹⁰ Information from the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Office 23 October 2014.

¹¹ See recess dates for 2014-15: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/ABOUT-THE-ASSEMBLY/General-Information/Recess-Dates/>.

3 Summary

Arrangements for sitting times in both the Swedish Riksdag and the Northern Ireland Assembly include family-friendly provisions¹². However, both legislatures have processes that can suspend such arrangements where parliamentary business determines.

Provisions for sitting times for both legislatures are summarised in Table 2¹³.

Table 2: Provisions for Sitting Times in the Riksdag and the Northern Ireland Assembly

Provision	Riksdag	Northern Ireland Assembly
Usual sitting days	Wednesday and Thursday	Monday and Tuesday
Time limit to sittings	23.00	18.00
Recess	Christmas, Summer, Easter	Halloween, Christmas, Easter, Summer
Plenary-free week per month	Yes	No
Scheduled voting times	Yes: 4pm on sitting days	No

¹² For a summary of family-friendly procedures, see Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 46/12 Family-friendly practices 10 February 2012: <http://assist.assemblyni.gov.uk/services/rsrchlib/products/researchpubs/dept/procedures/2012/mccaffrey4612.pdf>.

¹³ A calendar for the forthcoming year in the Riksdag is available on the Riksdag website, 'Kalender': <http://www.riksdagen.se/sv/Start/Kalendern/?icalid=81391#81391>; the Business Diary for the Northern Ireland Assembly is available on the Northern Ireland Assembly website, 'Business Diary': <http://aims.niassembly.gov.uk/assemblybusiness/businessdiary.aspx>



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

22 September 2014

NIAR 295-14

Michael Potter

Act for Real Equality between Women and Men - France

1 Introduction

This paper summarises the Loi No 2014-873 pour l'égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes¹. The Bill was introduced in the Sénat on 3 July 2013 and passed into law on 4 August 2014².

The paper gives a brief background to the Act and summarises some of the key provisions in relation to their intended impact on gender equality in France.

2 Background and Purpose of the Act

The objective of the Gender Equality Bill was for the equality of women and men in all its dimensions, specifically³:

- Professional equality
- Fight against specific vulnerabilities for women
- Protection of women from violence
- The image of women in the media

1 LOI n° 2014-873 du 4 août 2014 pour l'égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000029330832>.

2 For stages of the Bill, see Projet de loi pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes: <http://www.senat.fr/dossier-legislatif/pjl12-717.html>.

3 Projet de loi pour l'égalité réelle entre les femmes et les hommes, 'Objet du texte': <http://www.senat.fr/dossier-legislatif/pjl12-717.html>.

- Political, social and professional parity

The origins of the Bill derived from the conclusions of an inter-ministerial committee on the rights of women and equality between women and men in November 2012. This set out a number of ‘immediate and strong’ measures to advance equality between women and men along the following themes⁴:

- Tackling the habits of inequality from the youngest age
- Lightening the constraints of the daily lives of women and lifting the obstacles to professional equality
- Placing the reduction of inequalities between women and men at the heart of health policy
- Protecting women against violence
- Reducing inequality in all areas of action
- Affirming women’s rights at the international level

As a consequence of this initiative, each department was required to draft an action plan in relation to women’s rights⁵.

The Minister for Women’s Rights, Najat Vallaud Belacem, introduced the *Projet de Loi pour l’égalité entre les femmes et les hommes* in the Sénat on 3 July 2013. While both houses passed draft texts, there was need of a Joint Committee (*Commission mixte paritaire*) for a version acceptable to both houses, which passed an agreed text to the Constitutional Council on 23 July 2014. Following the removal of two Sections (7 and 10) due to reservations of the Constitutional Council, the Bill was passed into law (*promulguée*) on 4 August 2014⁶.

3 Provisions of the Act

French law contains a series of Codes which cover particular areas and are amended by legislation. The Codes amended by this Act are summarised at Appendix 2. This section summarises some of the main provisions of the Act.

Article 1 sets out the purpose of the Act, as follows:

1. Preventative and protective actions to combat violence against women and attacks on their dignity
2. Actions to reinforce acting against prostitution
3. Actions intended to prevent and combat sexist stereotypes
4. Actions regarded as ensuring women’s sexual autonomy, notably access to contraception and abortion
5. Actions to combat the vulnerability of women
6. Actions regarded as guaranteeing professional and remunerative equality and the desegregation of occupations

4 Comité interministériel aux droits des femmes et à l’égalité entre les femmes et les homes (2012), *Une troisième génération des droits des femmes: vers une société de l’égalité réelle*, Paris: Premier Minsitre: <http://femmes.gouv.fr/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/CI-DDF-RELEVE-V7.pdf>.

5 Droits des Femmes : les feuilles de route ministérielles, Ministère des Drotis des Femmes, accessed 28 January 2014: <http://femmes.gouv.fr/droits-des-femmes-les-feuilles-de-route-ministerielles/>

6 A brief summary of the passage of French legislation is at Appendix 1.

7. Actions in favour of a better work-life balance and the equal division of parental responsibility
8. Actions seen as favouring equal access of women and men to electoral representation and public life, as well as positions of professional and social responsibility
9. Actions regarded as guaranteeing equality of treatment between women and men and their equal access to artistic creation and production, as well as the distribution of works
10. Actions seen as bringing to public attention French and international research on the social construction of gender roles

Some of the key provisions of the Act are discussed below.

Promotion of equality in private companies

Article 16 of the Act provides for the exclusion of companies from applying for public contracts if they have been subject of a successful discrimination case or for the non-respect of professional equality between women and men⁷.

The aim is to encourage more equitable practices in private companies by imposing a financial penalty, i.e. that companies with a poor track record on discrimination will not be awarded public contracts.

Shared parental leave

Parental leave is extended by an additional six months, provided that six months is taken by the second parent. Currently, parents of one child may take six months. The parental leave for a second child onwards remains at three years, but the Act provides that at least six months of this must be taken by the second parent, otherwise only two and a half years may be taken⁸.

These provisions are aimed at encouraging more parents to share time off to look after children, as currently this is mainly done by women. By making time off more equal, it is intended to make women's and men's lifetime incomes more equal and encourage sharing of domestic responsibilities.

Guarantee of child maintenance payments

The legislation provides for the assurance, on an experimental basis, that child maintenance will be guaranteed by the state. This is to remedy the problem of unpaid child maintenance, predominantly to female single parents, where the state takes responsibility rather than placing the onus on the individual⁹.

Protection of victims of domestic violence

The process for protection orders is to be speeded up and renewal of the order is to be made easier. Most victims of domestic violence are women and this arrangement will ensure that they are initially protected quickly and that continued protection is available if needed

7 'L'interdiction de soumissionner aux contrats publics posée par la nouvelle loi Egalité femmes-hommes', Le Monde 25 July 2014: <http://www.lemoniteur.fr/165-commande-publique/article/actualite/24969592-l-interdiction-de-soumissionner-aux-contrats-publics-posee-par-la-nouvelle-loi-egalite-femmes-hommes>.

8 'Le congé parental pour les pères a été voté', Le Monde 23 July 2014: http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/07/23/le-projet-de-loi-sur-l-egalite-hommes-femmes-definitivement-adopte-au-senat_4461741_3224.html.

9 'Une garantie contre les pensions alimentaires impayées expérimentée dans 20 départements', Libération 12 February 2014: http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2014/02/12/une-garantie-contre-les-pensions-alimentaires-impayees-experimentee-dans-20-departements_979696.

without gaps between expiry and renewal. In addition, the abuser will now be required to leave accommodation shared with the abused, with the victim being maintained in the home.¹⁰

A scheme for the issue of emergency telephones to women in most danger from domestic violence is to be extended to the whole of France. This provision is intended to protect the most vulnerable women, as there were 146 deaths in France because of domestic violence during 2013¹¹.

Representation of women in society

A variety of measures are provided for in the Act to increase the representation of women in decision-making in key areas of society and to address negative stereotypes of women.

The Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA)¹², the body which oversees media freedom in France, is to receive new responsibilities to challenge broadcasts that are sexist or have images degrading to women¹³. In addition, beauty pageants for girls under thirteen years old are to be prohibited and for girls aged 13-16 years, official permission will be required¹⁴. This is to address the 'mini-miss' phenomenon, which is deemed to sexualise girls at a young age.

Provisions to assure greater representation of women include the following:

- France has gender parity laws for candidates for political office in certain elections in France¹⁵. The legislation provides for the more effective application of penalties for infringement of this obligation.
- Bodies representing sports in which there is more than 25% female participation have to have 40% women on their boards; those with less than 25% female participation must have 25% women on their boards¹⁶.
- The parity obligation is to be applied to public institutions and local chambers of commerce and is to be phased in to all consultative bodies of the state¹⁷.

The application of quotas to increase women's participation and normalise equal representation has been a matter of significant debate¹⁸. France has used quotas in a number of areas since 2000¹⁹:

-
- 10 'Egalité femmes-hommes : une loi pour faire changer les mentalités', French Government website, accessed 12 September 2014: <http://www.gouvernement.fr/gouvernement/egalite-femmes-hommes-une-loi-pour-faire-changer-les-mentalites>.
- 11 'Violences conjugales : le téléphone d'alerte va être généralisé', Le Monde 22 August 2014: http://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2014/08/22/le-telephone-d-alerte-pour-lutter-contre-les-violences-conjugales-generalise_4475364_3224.html.
- 12 Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel website: <http://www.csa.fr/>.
- 13 'Une nouvelle loi contre les stéréotypes sexistes dans l'audiovisuel public (Chiennes de garde)', l'Humanité 24 July 2014: <http://www.humanite.fr/une-nouvelle-loi-contre-les-stereotypes-sexistes-dans-laudiovisuel-public-chiennes-de-garde-548168>.
- 14 'Les concours de beauté pour enfants sont interdits en France', Le Particulier 7 August 2014: http://www.leparticulier.fr/jcms/p1_1565778/les-concours-de-beaute-pour-enfants-sont-interdits-en-france.
- 15 See Research and Information Service Research Paper 9/14 Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly 3 September 2013, pp.17, 18: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/potter0914.pdf.
- 16 Article 63, Projet de loi pour l'égalité entre les femmes et les homes.
- 17 'Egalité femmes-hommes : une loi pour faire changer les mentalités', French Government website, accessed 12 September 2014.
- 18 See Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 57/14 The Use of Quotas to Increase the Political Representation of Women 21 May 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/5714.pdf.
- 19 Annick Masselot and Anthony Maymont (2014), 'Balanced Representation between Men and Women in Business Law: The French 'Quota' System to the Test of EU Legislation', Centre for European Law and Legal Studies online papers, 3(2), pp.11-16.
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- Law of 6 June 2000 to improve the political representation of women²⁰
- Law of 9 May 2001 requiring balanced representation of women in juries, selection committees and advisory bodies in government²¹
- Law of 27 January 2011 introducing a 40% gender quota for boards of listed companies²²
- Law of 12 March 2012 requiring at least 40% of each sex on boards and equivalent bodies of public institutions²³
- Law of 26 July 2013 requiring a gender balance on the High Council for Financial Stability²⁴

One critique of the 2014 Act is that the parity principle is only being applied to public bodies, rather than private companies²⁵.

Abortion

Article 24 of the Act provides that women do not have to give a reason to have an abortion. Previously, women have had to demonstrate a 'situation of distress' before having a termination²⁶.

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- 20 LOI no 2000-493 du 6 juin 2000 tendant à favoriser l'égal accès des femmes et des hommes aux mandats électoraux et fonctions electives: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000400185&astPos=1&fastReqId=349628527&categorieLien=id&oldAction=rechTexte>.
- 21 LOI no 2001-397 du 9 mai 2001 relative à l'égalité professionnelle entre les femmes et les homes: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000000756495&fastPos=2&fastReqId=915561736&categorieLien=id&oldAction=rechTexte>.
- 22 LOI n° 2011-103 du 27 janvier 2011 relative à la représentation équilibrée des femmes et des hommes au sein des conseils d'administration et de surveillance et à l'égalité professionnelle: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000023487662>.
- 23 LOI n° 2012-347 du 12 mars 2012 relative à l'accès à l'emploi titulaire et à l'amélioration des conditions d'emploi des agents contractuels dans la fonction publique, à la lutte contre les discriminations et portant diverses dispositions relatives à la fonction publique: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000025489865>.
- 24 LOI n° 2013-672 du 26 juillet 2013 de séparation et de régulation des activités bancaires, Articles 30 and 79: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichTexte.do?cidTexte=JORFTEXT000027754539>.
- 25 Annick Masselot and Anthony Maymont (2014), 'Balanced Representation between Men and Women in Business Law: The French 'Quota' System to the Test of EU Legislation', Centre for European Law and Legal Studies online papers, 3(2), p.13.
- 26 'La loi égalité hommes-femmes promulguée', Le Figaro 5 August 2014: <http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2014/08/05/97001-20140805FILWWW00152-la-loi-egalite-hommes-femmes-promulguee.php>.
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4 Summary

This has been a brief introduction to a large and wide-ranging law to address inequalities between women and men in France. A Bill which originally comprised 25 clauses was passed into law as an Act with 77 sections (Articles). This has therefore only been a broad overview.

The Act is intended as a multi-dimensional approach to addressing inequalities between women and men, as indicated by the considerable number of Codes that have been amended by the legislation (see Appendix 2), which encompass multiple arenas of social, political and economic life.

The official French Government summary of the Act states²⁷:

The key steps taken are intended to encourage fathers to take parental leave, to make access to public procurement conditional on professional equality in companies, protect single mothers from unpaid child maintenance, or to extend the principle of parity to all areas of responsibility.

While some measures are specific and practical, for example to protect vulnerable women from domestic violence, single parents from losing child maintenance or young girls from sexualisation at an early age, many of the other measures in themselves are not expected to create gender equality, but to 'change mentalities'. For example, encouraging more men to share parental responsibility at home, insisting on gender parity in a range of decision-making scenarios and addressing stereotyping in the media are intended to change social attitudes towards gender roles more generally over time.

²⁷ 'Egalité femmes-hommes : une loi pour faire changer les mentalités', French Government website, accessed 12 September 2014: <http://www.gouvernement.fr/gouvernement/egalite-femmes-hommes-une-loi-pour-faire-changer-les-mentalites>.

Appendix 1: Summary of the Passage of Legislation in France²⁸

Introduction (*dépôt*) of a Bill (*Projet de Loi*) to either House (*Assemblée Nationale* or *Sénat*)

The Bill is printed and sent to all Members (*Députés* or *Sénateurs*)

The Bill is discussed in a Committee (*Commission*)

The Committee publishes a report on the Bill

There is a debate in plenary (*Séance Publique*), where the general principles are discussed in the relevant House, clauses (*articles*) debated and the whole Bill voted upon

The Bill passes to the other House, where it undergoes the same Committee and plenary process

Both Houses have to agree an identical text, which can lead to a 'shuttle' (*navette*) between the two Houses

If there is no agreement, or the Government directs, a Joint Committee (*Commission Mixte Paritaire*) is appointed to decide an agreed text

Once passed, the Bill has to go to the Constitutional Council (*Conseil Constitutionnel*) to check compliance with the Constitution

The Bill becomes law by Presidential proclamation (*promulgation*)

28

Summarised from 'La procédure législative', website of the Assemblée Nationale, accessed 27 January 2014: http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/connaissance/fiches_synthese/fiche_32.asp.

Appendix 2: Summary of Codes Amended by the Act

- Code du Travail – Labour Code²⁹
- Code de la Sécurité Sociale – Social Security Code³⁰
- Code de la Santé Publique - Public Health Code³¹
- Code de la Consommation – Consumer Code³²
- Code Civil – Civil Code³³
- Code Rural et de la Pêche Maritime – Rural and Sea Fishing Code³⁴
- Code de l'Urbanisme – Town Planning Code³⁵
- Code de la Construction et de l'Habitation – Construction and Housing Code³⁶
- Code de l'Action Sociale et des Familles – Social Action and Family Code³⁷
- Code de Procédure Pénale – Criminal Procedure Code³⁸
- Code Pénal – Criminal Code³⁹
- Code de la Défense – Defence Code⁴⁰
- Code de l'Entrée et du Séjour des Étrangers et du Droit d'Asile – Code for Foreigners to Enter and Stay and for the Right of Asylum⁴¹
- Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales – Code for Local Authorities⁴²
- Code Électoral – Electoral Code⁴³
- Code du Sport – Sports Code⁴⁴
- Code du Commerce – Commercial Code⁴⁵
- Code de l'Artisanat – Code for Crafts⁴⁶

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- 29 Code du Travail: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006072050>.
- 30 Code de la Sécurité Sociale: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006073189>.
- 31 Code de la Santé Publique: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006072665>
- 32 Code de la Consommation: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006069565>.
- 33 Code Civil: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070721>.
- 34 Code Rural et de la Pêche Maritime: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071367>.
- 35 Code de l'Urbanisme: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006074075>.
- 36 Code de la Construction et de l'Habitation: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006074096>.
- 37 Code de l'Action Sociale et des Familles: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006074069>.
- 38 Code de Procédure Pénale: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071154>.
- 39 Code Pénal: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070719>.
- 40 Code de la Défense: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070719>.
- 41 Code de l'Entrée et du Séjour des Étrangers et du Droit d'Asile: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070158>.
- 42 Code Général des Collectivités Territoriales: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070633>.
- 43 Code Électoral: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006070239>.
- 44 Code du Sport: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006071318>.
- 45 Code du Commerce: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000005634379>.
- 46 Code de l'Artisanat: <http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/affichCode.do?cidTexte=LEGITEXT000006075116>.
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Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

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NIAR 758-14

Michael Potter

Women and Public Appointments in Northern Ireland

1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee into women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly¹.

During the meeting of 4 November 2014, the Committee requested information on the breakdown of public appointments by gender and government department. It also sought information on action to attract more women into public appointments.

¹ Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.

2 Women and Public Appointments in Northern Ireland

The most recent annual report on public appointments in Northern Ireland indicates that 34% of these are held by women. This is broken down as 35% of all public appointments and 22% of chairs of public bodies². A gender breakdown of appointments by government department is at Appendix 1. The lowest representation of women is for public appointments under the Department of Finance and Personnel (14.3%). The highest representation is for the non-ministerial department Food Standards Agency (42.9%), closely followed by the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety (42.5%).

Public appointments in Northern Ireland are the responsibility of the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister (OFMdfM)³, but are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments⁴.

The Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland⁵ does not specifically mention the appointment of women. The seven principles of the Code are:

1. Merit
2. Diversity
3. Equality
4. Openness, Transparency and Independence
5. Integrity
6. Proportionality
7. Respect

Under 'Diversity', the Code states:

The make-up of the Boards of Northern Ireland public bodies does not adequately reflect the make-up of the population. The opportunity to appoint the best people is greatly increased when every potential applicant is attracted and encouraged to apply and when individual attributes and differences are valued. Departments should ensure, as far as possible, that Boards are balanced in terms of skills and experience, and that opportunities to apply for positions on Boards are open to the communities they serve.

The Code states that the appointing department must prepare an appointment plan, which must include⁶:

A section on diversity which sets out what steps (in outreach and process) will be taken to achieve the best possible spread of applicants and, ultimately, appointees.

2 OFMdfM (2013), Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report 2012/13, Belfast: OFMdfM, p.14: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/public-bodies-public-appointments-annual-report-2012-13.pdf>.

3 'Public Appointments', OFMdfM website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/public-appointments>.

4 Website of the Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland: <http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/>

5 Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (2014), Code of Practice for Ministerial Public Appointments in Northern Ireland, Belfast: CPANI: http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/cpa_ni_code_of_practice_jk4_-_feb_2014.pdf.

6 Ibid., p.11.

The selection panel must have received training in the past 36 months, including on equality and diversity issues, and advertisements are to encourage diversity⁷.

The Commissioner for Public Appointments has been engaged on the issue of diversity and a Diversity Working Group met for the first time in July 2012⁸. A report on diversity published by the Commissioner in 2014 acknowledged that initiatives to date had had little impact on increasing diversity⁹. The report contains a range of recommendations to government to improve diversity on public boards. These are reproduced at Appendix 2.

While the report contains references to research that demonstrates the positive effects of having a balance of women and men on boards, there is only one recommendation that is specific to women, as part of recommendation [2], that¹⁰:

the culture and practices of individual boards should be examined to ensure that they are conducive to women and other under-represented groupings serving on them.

A snapshot of public appointment vacancies was taken on 10 November 2014. On this date, the following vacancies were advertised¹¹:

- Chair and Deputy Chair to the Consumer Council (DETI)¹²
- Chair and Community Members to Board of Education Authority (DE)¹³
- Board Members to the Governing Body of St Mary's University College (DEL)¹⁴
- Non Executive Members to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority (DRD)¹⁵

The Consumer Council advertisement contains a statement on diversity, as follows:

People with a disability and ethnic minority communities are currently under-represented on the Board and applications from members of these groups would be particularly welcome. Note: We are operating the Guaranteed Interview Scheme in this competition for applicants with a disability.

The advertisement also contains a statement on equality of opportunity:

The Department is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. The Department is also committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes application forms from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of religious belief, gender, race, political opinion, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependants.

7 Ibid., pp.13, 37.

8 'Diversity Working Group meets for first time', CPANI news release 17 July 2012: <http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/index/news.htm>.

9 Commissioner for Public Appointments for Northern Ireland (2014), Under-representation and Lack of Diversity in Public Appointments in Northern Ireland, Belfast: CPANI, pp.3-5: http://www.publicappointmentsni.org/under-representation_and_lack_of_diversity_in_public_appointments_in_northern_ireland.pdf.

10 Ibid., p.12.

11 'Current Vacancies', Public Appointments page, OFMdfM website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.ofmdfmni.gov.uk/public-appointments>.

12 Current Vacancies GENERAL CONSUMER COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (The Consumer Council), accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.detini.gov.uk/index/deti-about-home/about-public-appointments/about-current-vacancies.htm>.

13 Appointment of Chair and Community Members to Board of Education Authority, accessed 10 November 2014: http://www.deni.gov.uk/appointment_of_chair_and_community__members_to_board_of_education_authority.

14 Appointment of Board Members to the Governing Body of St Mary's University College, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.delni.gov.uk/appontment-of-board-members-to-the-governing-body-ofstmarys-university-college>

15 Appointment of Non Executive Members to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority (WHA), accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/appointment-of-non-executive-members-to-warrenpoint-harbour-authority>.

There is no specific reference to the encouragement of women to apply. Currently, four of the ten members of the Consumer Council are women (40%)¹⁶.

The Board of Education advertisement includes a statement that specifically encourages women to apply, as well as other under-represented groups:

Applications are particularly welcome from women, people under 30 years of age, members of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

The Board of Education is a new body and does not yet have members.

The advertisement for board members for St Mary's College includes a statement on equality of opportunity:

The Department for Employment and Learning is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. The Department is committed to providing equality of opportunity for all individuals.

There is no statement in the advertisement specifically encouraging women to apply. Currently, six of the seventeen governors are women (35%)¹⁷.

The Warrenpoint Harbour Authority advertisement does not contain any reference to equality of opportunity on the Department website version, but there is such a statement in the press advertisement, including a specific statement encouraging applications from women¹⁸:

The Department for Regional Development is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness and transparency of process. The Department is also committed to providing equality of opportunity and welcomes applications regardless of disability, ethnic origin, religion, political opinion, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation or whether or not you have dependants. Applications from women are particularly welcome. Information Packs and Application Forms can be provided in alternative formats. Applicants who require assistance will be facilitated on request.

Currently, one of the ten Board members is female (10%)¹⁹.

In this short survey of four advertisements at the time of writing, all indicated some commitment to equal opportunities or diversity and half specifically mentioned women.

In broad terms, it has been suggested that there are four methods for increasing numbers of an under-represented group on public boards²⁰:

1. Quotas – departments are legally obliged appoint a certain percentage of a target group
2. Targets – if a certain percentage of a target group is not reached, remedial action is expected to be taken

16 Member Details, Consumer Council website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.consumerCouncil.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/member-details/>.

17 St Mary's University College Board of Governors, St Mary's College website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk/general/boardofgov.asp>.

18 Appointment Of Non Executive Members To The Board Of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority, advertisement, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://www.drdni.gov.uk/appointment-of-non-executive-members-to-the-board-of-warrenpoint-harbour-authority-advertisement.pdf>.

19 The Board, Warrenpoint Harbour Authority website, accessed 10 November 2014: <http://warrenpointharbour.com/the-board>.

20 Michael Pinto-Duschinsky and Lynne Middleton (2013), *Reforming Public Appointments*, London: Policy exchange, pp.61-4.

3. 'Tie-breakers' – if two applicants are equally qualified, the appointment is given to the member of a target group
4. Special measures – programmes are undertaken to encourage a target group to apply

The UK Government launched a drive in 2013 to increase female representation on public boards to 50% by 2015²¹. This target is aspirational.

The Scottish Government has published a consultation on introducing quotas for women on public boards²². Quotas have also been considered in Wales²³.

In the Republic of Ireland, Kathleen Lynch, Minister of State for the Department of Justice, has stated that she is compiling a list of eligible women that ministers can draw upon for public appointments²⁴.

21 'Drive to increase number of women on public boards', Cabinet Office press release 25 June 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/drive-to-increase-number-of-women-on-public-boards>.

22 'Women On Board: Quality through Diversity, Scottish Government Consultation on the Introduction of Gender Quotas on Public Boards', press release 30 April 2014: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/04/1438>.

23 'Legislation possible for 40% women on public boards', BBC News 4 March 2013: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-politics-21634489>; 'Drive to get more women in public appointments', Welsh Government press release 8 July 2013: <http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/equalityanddiversity/2013/130708-women-public-appointments/?lang=en>.

24 'State boards need more 'awkward women', according to Lynch', Irish Examiner 9 January 2014: <http://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/state-boards-need-more-awkward-women-according-to-lynch-254719.html>.

Appendix 1: Departmental Public Bodies by Gender²⁵

Department of Agriculture & Rural Development

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	6	5	1
Members	54	42	12
Total	60	47	13

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	3	3	–
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	2	1	1
Members	£10,000 or more	1	1	–
	Less than £10,000	22	17	5
	Unpaid (expenses only)	31	24	7
	Total	60	47	13

Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	8	7	1
Members	88	66	22
Total	96	73	23

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	6	6	–
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	1	–	1
Members	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	25	18	7
	Unpaid (expenses only)	63	48	15
	Total	96	73	23

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This information is derived from OFMdfM (2013), Public Bodies and Public Appointments Annual Report 2012/13, Belfast: OFMdfM: <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/public-bodies-public-appointments-annual-report-2012-13.pdf>.

Department of Education

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	8	6	2
Members	367	221	146
Total	375	227	148

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	7	5	2
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
Members	£10,000 or more	2	1	1
	Less than £10,000	5	2	3
	Unpaid (expenses only)	360	218	142
	Total	375	227	148

Department for Employment and Learning

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	13	11	2
Members	362	235	127
Total	375	246	129

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	4	3	1
	Less than £10,000	2	2	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	7	6	1
Members	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	250	156	94
	Unpaid (expenses only)	112	79	33
	Total	375	246	129

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	4	4	–
Members	39	30	9
Total	43	34	9

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	4	4	–
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
Members	£10,000 or more	11	10	1
	Less than £10,000	28	20	8
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
	Total	43	34	9

Department of the Environment

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	7	6	1
Members	59	39	20
Total	66	45	21

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	2	2	–
	Less than £10,000	2	1	1
	Unpaid (expenses only)	3	3	–
Members	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	58	38	20
	Total	66	45	21

Department of Justice

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	11	7	4
Members	68	44	24
Total	79	51	28

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	6	4	2
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	4	2	2
Members	£10,000 or more	17	10	7
	Less than £10,000	12	8	4
	Unpaid (expenses only)	39	26	13
	Total	79	51	28

Department of Finance and Personnel

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	3	3	–
Members	11	9	2
Total	14	12	2

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	1	1	–
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	2	2	–
Members	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	4	4	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	7	5	2
	Total	14	12	2

Department of Health, Social Services & Public Safety

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	15	11	4
Members	138	77	61
Total	153	88	65

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	13	9	4
	Less than £10,000	2	2	—
	Unpaid (expenses only)	—	—	—
Members	£10,000 or more	—	—	—
	Less than £10,000	123	72	51
	Unpaid (expenses only)	15	5	10
	Total	153	88	65

Department for Regional Development

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	5	5	—
Members	47	39	8
Total	52	44	8

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	5	5	—
	Less than £10,000	—	—	—
	Unpaid (expenses only)	—	—	—
Members	£10,000 or more	23	20	3
	Less than £10,000	17	14	3
	Unpaid (expenses only)	7	5	2
	Total	52	44	8

Department for Social Development

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	4	4	–
Members	18	11	7
Total	22	15	7

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	1	1	–
	Less than £10,000	1	1	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	2	2	–
Members	£10,000 or more	1	1	–
	Less than £10,000	12	7	5
	Unpaid (expenses only)	5	3	2
	Total	22	15	7

Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	8	4	4
Members	56	34	22
Total	64	38	26

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	7	3	4
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	1	1	–
Members	£10,000 or more	23	12	11
	Less than £10,000	25	18	7
	Unpaid (expenses only)	8	4	4
	Total	64	38	26

Food Standards Agency

Membership of Public Bodies at 31 March 2013

Membership of Public Bodies: Chairs and Members

	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	1	–	1
Members	6	4	2
Total	7	4	3

Membership of Public Bodies: Gender and Remuneration

	Remuneration	Total	Male	Female
Chairs	£10,000 or more	1	–	1
	Less than £10,000	–	–	–
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
Members	£10,000 or more	–	–	–
	Less than £10,000	6	4	2
	Unpaid (expenses only)	–	–	–
	Total	7	4	3

Appendix 2: Recommendations of the Commissioner for Public Appointments to Increase Diversity in Public Appointments²⁶

Strategic recommendations

- [1] Make board diversity public policy and set measurable goals: - Specific public policy should be developed on board diversity, together with an overall framework for action by the Executive and Departments, and this should be articulated to the public, monitored and reported on annually.
- [2] It should be made clear to Departments and the public that the intention is to change the culture of the public appointment process with the aim of improving diversity and eradicating under-representation on public boards.

Also, the culture and practices of individual boards should be examined to ensure that they are conducive to women and other under-represented groupings serving on them.
- [3] The recently created inter-departmental 'Public Appointments Forum' [the Forum] provides capacity for issues of under-representation and lack of diversity to be addressed across the N.I. Civil Service rather than on a departmental basis. The Forum should be tasked with ensuring that the new policy and framework at [1] above is articulated and disseminated across all Departments and it should be sufficiently resourced to carry out its work. It is also recommended that 'Diversity' should feature as a standing item on the agendas of the Forum.
- [4] It is considered that the Forum might benefit from the inclusion of a challenge function, provided by an external member or members. This should be examined.
- [5] It is believed that the establishment of diversity targets, set at overall and departmental levels, will lend focus and rigour to the diversity initiative.

Work should begin on establishing such targets.
- [6] Departments should conduct a statistical analysis of applications after each recruitment competition, to discern progress towards greater diversity. The departmental analysis should then be pooled for an overall picture. These analyses should inform the on-going development of policy and practice.

Awareness-raising recommendations

- [7] Mechanisms for raising awareness of public appointments are fragmented.

Consideration should be given to a more centralised approach, perhaps using the NI Direct website. Vacancies should also be publicised through the public libraries network, which has proved successful in recent competitions. The nature of public appointment advertisements should be reviewed as they are seen by many to be unattractive to people outside the 'usual circle' of applicants. The imaginative use of technology should be more fully explored in the task of raising awareness.
- [8] The use of case studies should be developed, portraying successes by individuals from under-represented groups who have gained places on public boards.
- [9] All information on public appointments, e.g. 'Make your Mark: A Guide to Public Appointments in Northern Ireland', should be revised, in conjunction with CPA NI, to reflect the new policy and framework at [1] above, and should portray a proactive and focussed approach by Government to addressing under-representation and lack of diversity, whilst honouring and protecting the principle of selection on merit.
- [10] A pilot project to raise awareness amongst potential applicants/interested parties is currently being considered by CPA NI and a Department. The results of this pilot should be disseminated across the Departments.

Recruitment-process recommendations

- [11] Departments should include, in the 'Appointment Plan' which they produce for every public appointment competition, a section on diversity which sets out, for the Minister's approval, what steps [in outreach and process] will be taken to achieve the best possible spread of applicants and, ultimately, appointees. CPA NI will include this requirement in the Commissioner's Code of Practice.
- [12] The public appointment process has a tendency to be 'generic' in nature, i.e. focussed on making a 'public appointment' as opposed to appointing an individual to the board of a specific organisation, with its specific requirements of board members. Many examples have been cited, by panel members, of experienced candidates using 'stock answers' which they have developed to answer the commonly used questions in most public appointment competitions. Departments should focus the recruitment process more on the requirements of the particular organisation and its board.
- [13] Departments should examine the opportunity to reduce the number of statutory nominations to the boards of their arms-length bodies, opening up positions for a wider range of applicants.
- [14] Departments could consider interviewing a larger number of applicants where is appropriate to do so.
- [15] Departments, in populating boards, should be 'building teams' rather than 'filling slots'. This will lead to such measures as:
- conducting an audit of board skills and planning to recruit against identified needs, including the types of community-based skills and perspectives that are not well reflected in the standard set of competencies typically used in current public appointment processes.
 - if necessary creating different categories of board member, with specific application form questions and interview questions.
 - looking critically at job descriptions and person specifications to reflect this approach and widen the range of potential applicants.
 - looking critically at the criteria and not sticking to the 'tried and tested' criteria used frequently across public appointments.
 - changing the written / verbal balance of the process where appropriate, e.g. it might be better, on the 'communication' criterion, to require the candidate to demonstrate his/her abilities throughout the interview or by means of a presentation rather than providing a written 'stock answer' on the application form.
 - avoiding the clichéd questions; developing questions that draw out a proper demonstration of competency.
 - reducing the number of selection criteria where appropriate, or asking applicants to fulfil some, not all, of the criteria, on the basis that the board does not need one omogeneous group of board members who replicate each other's skills and abilities.
 - reviewing the use of 'knowledge' criteria, in which there are many examples of candidates 'cutting and pasting' website answers; instead make these criteria such that candidates have to give short presentations at interview.

Analysis recommendations

- [16] 'Multiple appointments' [when one individual is appointed to two or more boards] have been cited by consultees as reducing opportunities for others to secure public appointments. The statistics on multiple appointments should be examined and policy developed that will guide Departments and their appointment panels on how to handle the issue. Some restriction on multiple appointments would be seen, by many, as evidence of the culture change that is sought in public appointments.
- [17] Succession planning for board membership has been patchy in many Departments and arms-length bodies and should be improved. Recent CPA NI audits have highlighted this requirement. This work by Departments should include consideration of diversity and how succession planning can incorporate diversity planning.
- [18] Remuneration of board members does not exhibit consistency, with some board members being unremunerated. This is believed by many to be a disincentive to potential applicants. An audit should be conducted across the Departments to determine the full facts, and guidelines produced to assist Departments in dealing consistently and fairly with the matter.

Outreach recommendations

- [19] Departments should specifically encourage applications from 'nontraditional backgrounds'; they should include this in the application form and should target interest groups and sectoral groups.
- [20] Departments should consider use of the 'Guaranteed Interview' scheme which has had some success in bringing forward for interview candidates with a disability who demonstrate in the application form that they have the basic competencies for the board position. Also, with regard to applicants in receipt of various disability benefits, guidelines should be developed to address the problem of potential applicants being dissuaded from applying for remunerated posts because of the potential disruption to their benefits.
- [21] Departments should consider using a variation of the welcoming statement commonly included in advertisements for public appointments, to ensure that it is clear they are seeking the widest range of applicants, including applicants from the private and third sectors.
- [22] The content, language and style of candidate information packs should be reviewed, with input by CPA NI, in line with the new policy and framework at [1] above.
- [23] More support should be provided for individuals who are considering applying for public appointments. Short seminars and / or papers could be prepared to help potential applicants understand what public appointments are, how they get to know what opportunities are being advertised, how to understand the competency-based selection process and what panels are looking for, how to deal with the application and interview process and how to portray their skills and abilities as added value to the board.
- [24] Very few younger people have been able to secure Board positions; senior officials and recruitment panels have often expressed reluctance to take the risk they see attached to placing relatively inexperienced people on boards, even when the skills and perspectives of a younger person might add value to the board of a particular organisation. A range of possibilities exist, for introducing younger people to 'board life', including 'Shadow boards', mentoring relationships for young board members, and internships. Departments should consider developing such schemes, perhaps initially on a pilot basis.

CPA NI action recommendations

- [25] The audits of CPA NI, which include examination of departmental efforts on diversity in each competition, should include examination of how the competition arrangements fulfil the requirements of the new policy and framework.
- [26] CPA NI should ensure that Independent Assessors are trained and enabled to challenge pre-conceived ideas as to what is required of potential appointees and encourage recognition, at appointment panel level, of the benefits of diversity.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

24 October 2014

NIAR 662-14

Michael Potter and Ray McCaffrey

Job Sharing in Political Representation

1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee into women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly¹.

At evidence sessions on the 16 September and 7 October 2014 there was discussion on the adoption of job sharing for Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) as a family-friendly mechanism for encouraging the participation of more women in the Assembly². This paper summarises examples where job sharing for political representatives has been proposed and options for the introduction of such provisions in Northern Ireland³.

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- 1 Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.
 - 2 Minutes of evidence: 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly - Barriers and Challenges: Women's Resource and Development Agency' 16 September 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2014-2015/September-2014/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly-Barriers-and-Challenges-Womens-Resource-and-Development-Agency/>; 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly- Barriers and Challenges: Ms Jane Morrice' 7 October 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Official-Report/Committee-Minutes-of-Evidence/Session-2014-2015/October-2014/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly-Barriers-and-Challenges-Ms-Jane-Morrice/>.
 - 3 See also Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 46/12 Family-friendly practices 10 February 2012: <http://assist.assemblyni.gov.uk/services/rsrchlib/products/researchpubs/dept/procedures/2012/mccaffrey4612.pdf>.
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2 Job Sharing for Political Representatives

No examples of job sharing for political representatives were found.

In a policy paper presented to the Liberal Democrats' Spring Conference in 2014, job-sharing for political representatives was included as a measure for increasing gender balance and diversity in Parliament. The document states⁴:

The rationale for the proposal comes from evidence from the civil service, the professions and business that provision for high quality part-time work significantly increases the talent pool of women progressing into senior roles over time. This chimes with evidence in politics that perceived incompatibility with family life is a supply-side and demand-side factor limiting the number of women standing for Parliament.

The document states that the Party intends to introduce enabling legislation in the next Parliament.

Arguments in favour of job sharing include that it could help more women and disabled people into power, constituents could have two representatives for the price of one and such arrangements could attract a more diverse range of people who are subject to other restraints, such as caring or voluntary commitments⁵. In addition, job sharing has proven to be a positive practice in stressful corporate environments and Parliament is to be seen as any other workplace⁶.

Arguments against include that job share that splits the week may not be possible where a constituency is far away, constituents may end up going to both MPs, questions of whether it is fair to have two MPs in some constituencies and one in others, politics is not a job that can be done time-sharing, MPs have to be on top of constituency work which is more difficult when they are only there part of the time, being an MP is a vocation requiring full time commitment⁷ and there are questions around whether job share MPs would vote consistently or develop a coherent line of argument⁸.

Research carried out to gauge public opinion on job sharing for political representatives found⁹:

...that there are still relatively large proportions of the public who do not have a view on the subject. Insofar as they do have views, the public are divided. There is no great support for the introduction of job-sharing candidates but nor is there any overwhelming opposition.

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- 4 Liberal Democrats (2014), Power to the People: Policies for Political and Constitutional Reform, Policy Paper 117, London: Liberal Democrats, p.27: http://d3n8a8pro7vnm.cloudfront.net/libdems/pages/4138/attachments/original/1392840156/117_-_Power_to_the_People.pdf?1392840156.
 - 5 Frances Ryan (2013), 'What's wrong with a Parliament made of Tweedledees and Tweedledums?', New Statesman 16 September 2013: <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/09/whats-wrong-parliament-made-tweedledees-and-tweedledums>.
 - 6 Nicky Morgan, Minister for Women, quoted in 'MPs should job-share to bring more women into politics, women's minister says', Daily Telegraph 24 June 2014: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/10923026/MPs-should-job-share-to-bring-more-women-into-politics-womens-minister-says.html>.
 - 7 'Political double acts: Should MPs be allowed to job-share?', BBC News 23 November 2012: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20423564>
 - 8 'Lib Dems draw up job-share plans to boost number of women MPs', The Guardian 18 February 2013: <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/feb/18/lib-dems-job-share-mps>.
 - 9 Rosie Campbell and Philip Cowley (2013), The Public Will Never Stand For It. Or Maybe They Will: Attitudes to Job Sharing Parliamentarians, Paper for presentation to the Elections, Public Opinion and Parties conference, Lancaster University, 13-15 September 2013.
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3 Standing for a Shared Mandate: Scotland

A single example of two candidates standing for a job share mandate was for the first election to the Scottish Parliament in 1999, when Lorraine Mann stood for the Highlands and Islands Alliance as a job share with Eddie Stiven. In the event, they were unsuccessful, but the returning officer stated that he would only announce the first named candidate if she had won a seat¹⁰.

Ms Mann took the case to an employment tribunal, which ruled that politics was an 'occupation' for the purposes of sex discrimination provisions, but the Employment Appeal Tribunal found that it did not have the jurisdiction to rule on the decision of an Electoral Returning Officer¹¹.

One analysis following the case in Scotland highlighted the following points regarding job sharing and the fulfilment of parliamentary duties¹²:

1. Help and support of constituents – Accessibility of the Member is likely to increase, as on-duty surgery time would be the same as a single Member, but the chances of informal contact are doubled.
2. Voting in the legislature – Voting in the Scottish Parliament is electronic, so there cannot be any duplication. A system can be developed for disagreements, for example:
 - a. The appointment of junior and senior partners
 - b. Abstention in the event of disagreement
 - c. Designation of a person in the party to give advice
3. Participation in debates and committees – A one week on and one week off system works well for debates. Committees could be chosen individually according to interest, if Members are expected to sit on two on average.
4. Support to the party – The job share team would be subject to the whip as with any single Member, the agreement between partners would be open and therefore increase accountability and selection of partners by the party would take into account an ability to work together to ensure consistency.

4 Introducing Job Sharing

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are provided for under Part IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Sections 31-35)¹³. Section 33(2) simply states: 'Each constituency shall return six members'. Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are an excepted matter under Schedule 2 of the Act.

The Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Bill was introduced in the House of Commons by John McDonnell MP as a Private Member's Bill under the Ten Minute Rule on 21

10 'Party job-share row deepens', BBC Scotland 9 April 1999: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/events/scotland_99/news/315456.stm; 'Job-share candidate claims sex bias', Herald Scotland 29 September 1999.

11 Pat Strickland, Oonagh Gay, Julia Lourie and Richard Cracknell (2001) The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Bill [Bill 28 of 2001-02], House of Commons Research Paper 01/75 22 October 2001, pp.27-8: <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons/lib/research/rp2001/rp01-075.pdf>.

12 Alice Belcher and Andrea Ross (2001) 'The Case for Job-Sharing Elected Representatives', *Edinburgh Law Review*, 5 380-393.

13 Northern Ireland Act 1998: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/contents>.

November 2012¹⁴. The Bill was to 'enable representation of a constituency by two persons sharing membership of the House of Commons'.

The Bill failed to complete its passage through Parliament before the end of the session. The text of the Bill is at Appendix 1. On introduction, the Bill proposer set out a number of arguments in favour of job sharing and David Nuttall MP set out arguments against. These are summarised at Appendix 2.

14 Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Bill 2012-13: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2012-13/representationofthepeplemembersjobshare.html>.

Appendix 1: Text of the Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Bill¹⁵

1 Sharing arrangements

- (1) In subsection (1) of section 1 of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 ("the 1986 Act"), for the words "each returning a single member" substitute "each returning a member".
- (2) After subsection (2) of that section insert—
 - “(3) The reference in subsection (1) to a member is to—
 - (a) a single member, or
 - (b) two persons serving as members pursuant to a sharing arrangement, and a reference in any enactment to a member of Parliament is to be read accordingly.
- (4) For the purposes of subsection (3)(b), a sharing arrangement is an arrangement under which two individuals—
 - (a) present themselves jointly for election to Parliament on the basis that if elected, they will share the representation of the constituency between them, and
 - (b) if elected, serve in Parliament on that basis.”
- (3) So far as it is possible to do so, any enactment relating to Parliamentary elections, proceedings in Parliament, or the functions and privileges of Members of Parliament is to be read and given effect so as to be compatible with a sharing arrangement (within the meaning of the provisions inserted by subsection (2)).
- (4) The Speaker of the House of Commons may make a written request to the Government to make such provision, described in the request, as the Speaker considers appropriate to give further effect to sharing arrangements (within the meaning of the provisions inserted by subsection (2)).
- (5) As soon as practicable following receipt of a request under subsection (4), the Government shall lay before the House of Commons a draft of an Order in Council containing such provisions as the Government considers appropriate to give effect to the request.
- (6) An Order in Council under this section may include provision amending, or applying with modifications, an enactment of a kind mentioned in subsection (3).
- (7) No recommendation is to be made to Her Majesty in Council to make an Order in Council under this section unless a draft of the statutory instrument containing the Order in Council has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, the House of Commons.
- (8) Subject to any contrary provision contained in standing orders of the House of Commons for the time being in force, in any vote in that House—
 - (a) each of the two members for a constituency pursuant to a sharing arrangement may cast a half-vote, but
 - (b) where they so agree, and have informed the person presiding during the vote of that agreement, one of them may cast a single vote on behalf of both.

15 Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Bill: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2012-2013/0091/2013091.pdf>.

2 Death or disqualification of Members serving pursuant to a sharing arrangement

If either Member in a sharing arrangement dies or becomes disqualified from membership of the House of Commons, both shall be treated as having ceased to be Members.

3 Short title, commencement and extent

- (1) This Act may be cited as the Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Act 2012.
- (2) This Act comes into force at the end of the period of one month beginning with the day on which it is passed.
- (3) This Act extends to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Appendix 2: Arguments for and against Job Sharing on the Introduction of the Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Bill¹⁶

Arguments in Favour: John McDonnell MP

Would the two job sharers have to be from the same party?

It is proposed that that would be the case, and that would be covered in secondary legislation.

What would happen if the job sharers disagreed on an issue and wished to vote accordingly?

As the job sharers entered into a sharing arrangement before the election and were from the same party, one would expect them not always to agree on votes... where there is a difference, they can each exercise their right to use their half vote.

What would happen if one of the job sharers left the party under whose banner he or she was elected?

At present, there is no provision for forcing a by-election when a Member crosses the Floor of the House, but that is something Members might want to examine.

What would happen if one of the job sharers resigned, died or was disqualified?

Because the job sharers were elected on the basis of a job-share arrangement, both would be treated as having ceased to be MPs.

What would happen in situations where electors were happy with the performance of one of the job sharers but not with the other and therefore would not want to vote?

The job sharers would be standing as a team; that would be the job-sharing arrangement. The elector would still have one vote and be unable to split it, but would have to decide, in casting that vote, whether, on the basis of his or her overall judgment of their performance, the job-sharing team worked and whether he or she would vote for that arrangement in future.

What would happen if one of the job sharers became a Minister and were covered by collective responsibility?

A job sharer would be able to fulfil a ministerial role to the extent of the time that they had to devote to the role on a job-share basis, and in appointing Ministers the Prime Minister would take that into account.

Would it be more expensive to have two Members per constituency?

No, because the job sharers would share offices, facilities and staff.

Arguments Against: David Nuttall MP

What if two heterosexual white middle-aged barristers decided that it would be quite a nice idea if they both shared the job of being an MP while continuing their practice at the Bar? How would that help to increase the diversity of this House? We hear much criticism of politicians who have jobs outside Parliament, yet this Bill would cement the practice into law and make it the norm.

If the Bill is supposed to be a measure to help disabled people, I fear that it is simplistic and, indeed, patronising to many current and former Members who have performed and continue

16

HC Deb Vol 553 No 71, 20 November 2012, pp.472-477: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/chan71.pdf>.

to perform their duties with such distinction. Are the advocates of the Bill really suggesting that just because someone is female, black or disabled they are capable of doing only half the job on a part-time basis?

We have heard that Members would have half a vote each or a joint vote if there were agreement, but what if there were no agreement? What if both MPs took a different view and cancelled each other out, leaving their constituents unrepresented?

Who would constituents contact with a problem—one of them or both of them?

What would happen with this dual approach as regards Select Committee membership? Would one half of the job-sharing duo hear some of the evidence and then the other half hear the rest, so that we finished up with neither of them having heard it all? Indeed, how would it be decided who was elected to serve on the Committee in the first place?

What about debates in this House? Would both Members be entitled to be called? Would both be entitled to table questions?

Would every constituency in the country be required to have two Members? If it applied only to some constituencies, then surely those with two Members would have an advantage over those with a single Member. As everyone will be aware, with 650 Members there is already insufficient space in this Chamber for them all to have a seat.

If I were to represent a constituency as one half of a job-sharing duo with someone else who shared my concern that private Members' Bills should be properly scrutinised, we could together, on behalf of just one constituency, debate one Bill for a very long time.

Would those sharing the same role have to be from the same party? What would happen if two people from the same party were elected and then one of them decided to change parties? How would that work? Would there have to be some form of electoral pre-nuptial agreement? Would that become the norm? What would happen if the agreement were breached? Who would adjudicate in the event of a dispute?

It is hard to see how two people would not, at some point, need extra staff or office space. They would need a bigger taxpayer-funded residence in the capital or even require two separate residences in London if they represented a constituency some way away from Westminster. At the very least, there would be two sets of travel expenses.

I think that most people want to see fewer politicians, not more... I dread to think what would happen if the number of Members of the European Parliament were doubled, and how long would it be before we had double the number of councillors, elected mayors or, indeed, police and crime commissioners?



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

12 November 2014

NIAR 760-14

Michael Potter

Sitting and Voting Times in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland

1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee into women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly¹.

During the meeting of 4 November 2014, family friendly provisions in relation to the arrangements for sitting times and voting times in the Swedish Riksdag and the Northern Ireland Assembly was discussed. This paper briefly summarises the sitting and voting

¹ Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.

arrangements for the Northern Ireland Assembly², Scottish Parliament³, National Assembly for Wales⁴, House of Commons⁵, Dáil Éireann⁶, House of Lords⁷ and Seanad Éireann⁸.

2 Summary of Sitting and Voting Arrangements

This table summarises normal sitting and voting arrangements for legislatures on the islands of Britain and Ireland. All legislatures have exceptions and provisions that prioritise certain parliamentary business.

Legislature	Sitting Arrangements (Plenary Meetings)	Voting Arrangements (Divisions)
Northern Ireland Assembly	Monday noon – 6:00 pm, Tuesday 10:30 am – 6:00 pm (S010)	After a question is posed (S025); collection of voices or division (S027)
Scottish Parliament	Monday 14:30 – 17:00, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 09:15 – 17:30, Friday 09:30 – 12:30 (Rule 2.2)	Decision time: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday 17:00, Friday 12:00 (Rule 11.2); electronic or roll call (Rule 11.7)
National Assembly for Wales	Seek to avoid business before 9am or after 6pm (S011); Tuesday and Wednesday starting at 1:30pm (S012)	At the end of an item of business; electronic, show of hands or roll call (S012)
House of Commons	Monday 2:30pm – 10:30pm, Tuesday and Wednesday 11:30am – 7:30pm, Thursday 9:30am – 5:30pm, Friday 9:30 – 3pm (S09) For sittings in Westminster Hall: Monday 4:30pm – 7:30pm, Tuesday and Wednesday 9:30am – 11:30am and 2:30pm – 5pm, Thursday: 1:30pm – 4:30pm (S010)	Challenge to the decision of a question; by division (S038)
Dáil Éireann	Tuesday 2:30pm – 8:30pm, Wednesday 10:30am – 8:30pm, Thursday 10:30am – 4:45pm (S021)	On a question being put (S068); electronic or by division (S071)

- 2 Standing Orders of the Northern Ireland Assembly: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Standing-Orders/>.
- 3 Standing Orders of the Scottish Parliament: <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/17797.aspx>.
- 4 Standing Orders of the National Assembly for Wales: <http://www.assembly.wales/en/bus-home/Pages/bus-assembly-guidance.aspx>.
- 5 Standing Orders of the House of Commons: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmstords.htm>.
- 6 Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/viewdoc.asp?m=&DocID=-1&CatID=5>.
- 7 Standing Orders of the House of Lords: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld/ldstords/ldstords.htm>.
- 8 Standing Orders of Seanad Éireann: <http://www.oireachtas.ie/ViewDoc.asp?fn=/documents/ProceduralDocuments/document1.htm&CatID=31&m=s>.
- 9 'Business of the House of Lords', Parliament website, accessed 6 November 2014: <http://www.parliament.uk/about/faqs/house-of-lords-faqs/lords-statistics/>.

Legislature	Sitting Arrangements (Plenary Meetings)	Voting Arrangements (Divisions)
House of Lords	Not defined in SOs, but generally Monday and Tuesday from 2:30pm, Wednesday from 3pm, Thursday from 11am, Friday 10am, finishing 10-11pm ⁹	When called; by division (S053)
Seanad Éireann	10:30am Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (S021)	When a question is put (S058); electronic or by division (S062)

It should be noted that extensions to the times defined in Standing Orders are not necessarily exceptional. For example, during 2013 the Northern Ireland Assembly sat beyond 6pm on 35 occasions¹⁰.

10

Information from the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Office 23 October 2014.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

3 December 2014

NIAR 874-14

Michael Potter

Sittings of the Northern Ireland Assembly beyond 6pm

1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee into women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly¹.

In consideration of family-friendly policies, Standing Order 10 of the Northern Ireland Assembly limits, where possible, plenary meetings to 6pm on Mondays². During the meeting of 25 November 2014 the Committee asked what causes sittings in the Northern Ireland Assembly to extend beyond 6pm, in particular, whether this is due to the passage of legislation³.

1 Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.

2 See Research and Information Service Briefing Paper 121/14 Sitting and Voting Times in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland, 12 November 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/12114.pdf.

3 See also the report of the Committee on Procedures which has recently looked at this issue, Review of the current organisation of the business week of the Northern Ireland Assembly, 29 April 2014: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Reports/Procedures/review-of-nia-business-week.pdf>.

2 **Sittings Past 6pm**

Of the 245 plenary sittings of the Assembly since the beginning of the mandate to the end of November 2014, 105 have continued beyond 6pm, on most occasions (62) going beyond 7pm. On three occasions, sittings continued after midnight.

It is not within the scope of this paper to examine in detail the length of each debate on each of the occasions on which there were late sittings. However, 64 of the 105 late sittings included stages of primary legislation on the Order Paper. Therefore, there were 41 occasions when late sittings could not be explained by the passage of primary legislation and are attributable to other business.

Appendix 1 lists all the late sittings of the current mandate, adjournment times and the main items of business on the Order Paper.

Appendix 1: Sittings of the Northern Ireland Assembly Extending Beyond 6pm in the Current Mandate⁴

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>) ¹
Tuesday	13/09/2011	18:10	Motion – Part-Time Reserve Gratuity Scheme - Security Breach
Monday	10/10/2011	18:50	Motion: Prayer of Annulment S.R. 2011/293 Motion: Review of the Initial Ministerial Provision – Minister of Justice Motion: Safeguarding Water and Heating Supplies Motion: Dealing with the Past
Tuesday	25/10/2011	18:05	Motion: Utilisation of the former site of the Maze Prison Motion: Community Pharmacies
Monday	14/11/2011	19:15	Public Petition: Future of Knockmore Primary School, Lisburn Motion: EU Financial Corrections to be levied against the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development Motion: Banning Smoking in Cars Carrying Children Motion: Prison Review Team Final Report
Monday	28/11/2011	18:15	Public Petition: Reduction in opening hours of community libraries Motion: The Rates (Payments by Owners by Agreement) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011 Motion: Amendment Standing Order 49A Motion: Amend Standing Orders Motion: Amend Standing Order 59 Motion: Amend Standing Order 65(6) Motion: School Closures in the SEELB Area Motion: Retention and Release of Information from Police Officers
Tuesday	06/12/2011	18:30	Public Petition: Opposition to Hydraulic Fracturing in Northern Ireland Motion: Hydraulic Fracturing Motion: Impact of the Introduction of the Welfare of Laying Hens Directive
Monday	06/02/2012	19:05	Further Consideration Stage – Rates (Amendment) Bill (NIA Bill 2/11-15) Motion: Widening Access to Education Maintenance Allowance Motion: Car Insurance Regulation of the Local Home Heating Oil Industry
Tuesday	14/02/2012	19:40	Second Stage: Budget Bill (NIA Bill 4-11/15)

4

Sitting time details provided by the Northern Ireland Assembly Business Office; business details from 'Order Papers', Northern Ireland Assembly website: <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Order-Papers/>.

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Tuesday	28/02/2012	19:20	Motion: To Continue Operation of the Department of Justice from 1 May 2012 Motion: Car-jacking Crimes Motion: Securing Undeveloped Sites
Monday	12/03/2012	19:15	Motion: Programme for Government Motion: Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Rates (Microgeneration) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012
Tuesday	13/03/2012	18:45	Motion: The Northern Ireland Economic Strategy Motion: Draft Dog Control Orders (Prescribed Offences and Penalties, etc.) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012
Tuesday	27/03/2012	20:10	Consideration Stage - Pensions Bill (NIA 3/11-15) Motion: Review of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005
Tuesday	15/05/2012	18:05	Motion: Interim Report of the Committee for the Environment on its Inquiry into the Management of Used Tyres in Northern Ireland Motion: Transfer of Department for Employment and Learning Functions
Monday	28/05/2012	19:00	Legislative Consent Motion: Finance Bill Motion: Report on Fuel Poverty Motion: 'You Need to Know' Campaign
Tuesday	12/06/2012	21:50	Motion: Draft Local Government (Boundaries) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Amend Standing Order 49A Motion: Mixed Housing Motion: The Arms Trade Treaty
Monday	25/06/2012	19:45	Motion: Draft Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide (2007 Act) (Commencement) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Draft Race Relations Order 1997 (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 Second Stage: Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Bill (NIA 7/11-15) Second Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill (NIA 8/11-15)
Tuesday	26/06/2012	20:50	Consideration Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill (NIA 8/11-15) Motion: Public Accounts Committee Reports and Memoranda of Reply Motion: Review of the Number of Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly Motion: Prayer of Annulment S.R. 2012/203

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Monday	02/07/2012	19:35	Public Petition: Save our Townlands Motion: Nomination to the Regional Chamber of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE) Further Consideration Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill (NIA 8/11-15) Motion: Jobseeker's Allowance (Work Experience) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Archaeological Artefacts
Tuesday	03/07/2012	20:50	Second Stage: Criminal Justice Bill (NIA 10/11-15) Final Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill (NIA 8/11-15) Legislative Consent Motion: Local Government Finance Bill Motion: Draft Labour Relations Agency Arbitration Scheme (Jurisdiction) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Draft Local Government Best Value (Exclusion of Non-Commercial Considerations) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Report on the Inquiry into the Criminal Justice Services available to Victims and Witnesses of Crime
Monday	17/09/2012	20:20	Second Stage: Business Improvement Districts Bill (NIA 9/11-15) Motion: Short Stay Visa Waiver Scheme Motion: Apology from the Republic of Ireland
Tuesday	18/09/2012	18:40	Motion: Amend Standing Order 49A Motion: Amend Standing Order 57(1) Motion: Amend Standing Order 69A Motion: Amend Standing Order 69C Motion: Centenary of the Signing of the Ulster Covenant Motion: Parades
Monday	24/09/2012	18:20	Motion: Exclusion of Minister from Office under section 30 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 Motion: Draft Landlord Registration Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Draft Tenancy Deposit Schemes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Payment of Housing Benefit Motion: Animal Cruelty
Tuesday	25/09/2012	18:55	Motion: Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services Second Stage: Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill (NIA 12/11-15)

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Monday	08/10/2012	20:50	Motion: Investment Strategy for Northern Ireland 2011-21 Motion: Crisis in Farming Motion: Foodbanks Motion: Path to Economic Recovery
Tuesday	09/10/2012	01:10	Motion: Jobseeker's Allowance (Domestic Violence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Second Stage: Welfare Reform Bill (NIA 13/11-15)
Monday	15/10/2012	20:00	Motion: The draft Welfare of Animals (Docking of Working Dogs' Tails and Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Second Stage: Education Bill (NIA 14/11-15)
Tuesday	16/10/2012	18:35	Second Stage: Air Passenger Duty (Setting of Rate) Bill (NIA 15/11-15) Motion: Amend Standing Order 59 Motion: The Disappeared
Monday	05/11/2012	18:20	Public Petitions: New Build for Parkhall Integrated College Proposed Closure of Artillery Youth Centre Further Consideration Stage: Air Passenger Duty (Setting of Rate) Bill (NIA 15/11-15) Motion: Muscular Dystrophy and Related Neuromuscular Conditions Motion: Support for Councillor Sammy Brush
Tuesday	06/11/2012	19:05	Further Consideration Stage: Superannuation Bill (NIA 6/11-15) Final Stage: Air Passenger Duty (Setting of Rate) Bill (NIA 15/11-15) Motion: Voting Age
Monday	12/11/2012	19:23	Motion: Draft Local Government (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Funding for Boxing Motion: Construction Industry Motion: Diabetes Strategy
Monday	19/11/2012	20:50	Final Stage: Superannuation Bill (NIA 6/11-15) Motion: Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements - Welfare Reform Bill Motion: Child Poverty Action Plan Motion: Concern about the Consultation on Cross Border Education Motion: Reform of Employment Law

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Tuesday	20/11/2012	20:15	Motion: Establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on Conformity with Equality Requirements - Welfare Reform Bill Consideration Stage: Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse Bill (NIA 7/11-15) Consideration Stage: Charities Bill (NIA 11/11-15) Legislative Consent Motion: Small Charitable Donations Bill Motion: Energy Strategy
Monday	26/11/2012	18:35	Motion: Awareness of Small Business Research Initiative Motion: Review into Bovine Tuberculosis
Tuesday	22/01/2013	19:45	Second Stage: Planning Bill (NIA 17/11-15)
Tuesday	12/02/2013	18:06	Consideration Stage: Water and Sewerage Services (Amendment) Bill (NIA 16/11-15) Second Stage: Budget Bill (NIA 18/11-15)
Tuesday	19/02/2013	19:30	Further Consideration Stage: Budget Bill (NIA 18/11-15) Consideration Stage: Criminal Justice Bill (NIA 10/11-15)
Monday	25/02/2013	18:50	Consideration Stage: Criminal Justice Bill (NIA 10/11-15) Further Consideration Stage: Water and Sewerage Services (Amendment) Bill (NIA 16/11-15) Final Stage: Budget Bill (NIA 18/11-15) Legislative Consent Motion: Antarctic Bill Motion: Rates (Exemption for Automatic Telling Machines in Rural Areas) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: Rates (Temporary Rebate) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: Grassroot and Elite Sports Facilities Motion: Graduate Programmes in the Agri-food Sector
Tuesday	26/02/2013	18:27	Motion: Draft Companies (Public Sector Audit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: Establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee Motion: Entitlement Framework Funding and Strategy for 14-19 Year Olds
Tuesday	12/03/2013	19:58	Further Consideration Stage: Criminal Justice Bill (NIA 10/11-15)

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>) ¹
Tuesday	19/03/2013	23:24	Assembly Consent Motion: The Public Bodies (Abolition of British Shipbuilders) Order 2013 Assembly Consent Motion: The Public Bodies (Abolition of the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Arbitration Tribunal) Order 2013 Consideration Stage: Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill (NIA 12/11-15) Motion: EU Regional Aid
Tuesday	09/04/2013	18:36	Motion: EU Regional Aid Motion: Civic Forum on Participative Democracy
Monday	15/04/2013	18:16	Public Petition: Stop the closure of Crossmaglen Jobs and Benefits Office Motion: The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Worker's Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: Suicide Prevention Motion: Report on the Inquiry into Topical Questions Motion: Integrated Education
Tuesday	30/04/2013	20:35	Consideration Stage: Marine Bill (NIA 5/11-15)
Tuesday	07/05/2013	18:42	Motion: The draft Forestry (Felling of Trees) (Calculation of the Area of Land) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: New Primary School for Inner South Belfast Motion: Preferred Option Document on Paediatric Cardiac Surgery
Monday	13/05/2013	18:52	Public Petition: Opposition to cuts to Health Service dental care Further Consideration Stage: Marine Bill (NIA 5/11-15) Motion: Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: The Child Support Maintenance Calculation Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: The Child Support Maintenance (Changes to Basic Rate Calculation and Minimum Amount of Liability) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: The Child Support (Management of Payments and Arrears) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2012 Motion: Child Poverty Targets Motion: Energy Costs
Monday	20/05/2013	20:49	Further Consideration Stage: Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill (NIA 12/11-15) Motion: Sustainability of Hill Farming

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Tuesday	21/05/2013	18:58	Final Stage: Marine Bill (NIA 5/11-15) Motion: Announcement on a Shared Future Motion: Fall in Farm Incomes
Tuesday	28/05/2013	19:22	Public Petition: Call for a replacement Fire Station in Cushendall Motion: Epilepsy Service Provision Motion: Transforming Your Care Review
Monday	03/06/2013	20:23	Final Stage: Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill (NIA 12/11-15)
Monday	10/06/2013	19:04	Motion: Supply Resolution for the Northern Ireland Main Estimates 2013-14 Motion: Farm Inspections Process 2013
Tuesday	11/06/2013	21:25	Public Petitions: Campaign for the Meningitis B vaccine to be made available in Northern Ireland Second Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill (NIA 21/11-15) Second Stage: Carrier Bags Bill (NIA 20/11-15)
Tuesday	18/06/2013	19:43	Further Consideration Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill (NIA 21/11-15) Motion: Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Pupil Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: Statistics and Registration Services Act 2007 (Disclosure of Higher Education Student Information) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 Assembly Consent Motion: The Public Bodies (Abolition of the Registrar of Public Lending Right) Order 2013 Motion: Broadband Provision in Rural Areas Motion: Funding for Other Road Projects in Place of the A5 Western Transport Corridor
Monday	24/06/2013	01:00	Consideration Stage: Planning Bill (NIA 17/11-15) Final Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill (NIA 21/11-15) Legislative Consent Motion: Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Bill Legislative Consent Motion: Care Bill Motion: draft Renewables Obligation (Amendment No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013
Tuesday	25/06/2013	21:40	Public Petition: 'Magee Expansion: Time to Make it Happen' Second Stage: Public Service Pensions Bill (NIA 23/11-15) Second Stage: Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill (NIA 24/11-15) Consideration Stage: Planning Bill (NIA 17/11-15) Motion: IF Campaign/G8 Summit 2013

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Monday	01/07/2013	19:15	Public Petitions: 'Save the Dickson Plan' Save Westlands Home, Cookstown' Second Stage: Financial Provisions Bill (NIA 22/11-15) Legislative Consent Motion: Pensions Bill Legislative Consent Motion: Mesothelioma Bill Motion: The draft Local Government (Statutory Transition Committee) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: Amend Standing Order 10(2)(a) Motion: Amend Standing Order 19 Motion: Amend Standing Order 20 Motion: Amend Standing Order 20(1) Motion: Progress on North South Co-operation
Tuesday	10/09/2013	18:47	Public Petition: Pinewood Residential Care Home Motion: Promotion of Equality and Reconciliation Motion: Compensation Policy
Monday	23/09/2013	21:00	Legislative Consent Motion: Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill Second Stage: Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill (NIA 26/11-15)
Tuesday	24/09/2013	21:16	Second Stage: Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill [NIA 27/11-15] Motion: Appointment of an Acting Commissioner Motion: Access to Public Procurement Opportunities Motion: Common Funding Formula Motion: Support for DVANI Office Staff
Tuesday	01/10/2013	19:09	Second Stage: Local Government Bill
Tuesday	15/10/2013	18:31	Motion: Prison Review Reports Motion: National Crime Agency
Tuesday	22/10/2013	18:26	Legislative Consent Motion: Energy Bill (Decarbonisation Provisions) Motion: The Use of the Social Investment Model in Tackling Social Issues Motion: Review of the North South Implementation Bodies and Areas for Co-operation
Monday	04/11/2013	18:10	Legislative Consent Motion: Care Bill (Continuity of Care Provision) Motion: Report on the Investigation into Gaps in Child Protection and Safeguarding across the Culture, Arts and Leisure Remit Motion: Insulation in Housing Executive Properties

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Tuesday	05/11/2013	20:08	Public Petition: Save Exploris, the Northern Ireland Aquarium, Portaferry Motion: Fishing Boats (Satellite-Tracking Devices) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: The draft Pharmacy (1976 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 Motion: Report of the Committee Review Group on the Review of the Committee System Motion: Ban on Blood Donations from Gay Men Motion: Exploris - Northern Ireland Aquarium
Tuesday	12/11/2013	18:43	Legislative Consent Motion: Intellectual Property Bill (Freedom of Information Pre-Publication Exemption) Motion: Amend Standing Order 20A(1) Motion: Public Accounts Committee Reports and Memoranda of Reply Motion: Public Awareness Campaign on Prostate Cancer
Tuesday	19/11/2013	19:41	Motion: Effective Delivery of Major Infrastructure Work Motion: Support and Investment for the Higher Education Sector Motion: BBC/RTE Documentary on 'The Disappeared'
Monday	02/12/2013	20:56	Consideration Stage: Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15) Motion: Day Services for Individuals with a Learning Disability Motion: Small Business Saturday
Tuesday	03/12/2013	19:11	Consideration Stage: Tobacco Retailers Bill (NIA 19/11-15) Motion: School Hours
Monday	09/12/2013	20:07	Further Consideration Stage: Road Races (Amendment) Bill (NIA 29/11-15) Motion: Report on the Review into Electricity Policy: Part 1 – Security of Electricity Motion: Job Losses at HM Revenue and Customs
Monday	13/01/2014	20:22	Motion: Haass/O'Sullivan Proposals
Tuesday	14/01/2014	21:11	Consideration Stage: Public Service Pensions Bill (NIA 23/11-15)
Monday	20/01/2014	18:36	Consideration Stage: Health and Social Care (Amendment Bill) (NIA 27/11-15) Motion: Rural Development Funding within the Common Agricultural Policy Motion: Smithwick Tribunal Report
Monday	27/01/2014	21:23	Further Consideration Stage: Public Service Pensions Bill (NIA 23/11-15) Motion: Nursing Staff Levels in Key Hospital Wards

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in italics)¹
Monday	03/02/2014	18:22	Public Petition: Proposed closure of Immaculate Conception College <i>Legislative Consent Motion: Children and Families Bill</i> <i>Motion: Health Inequalities Experienced by People with a Learning Disability</i> <i>Motion: Mental Wellbeing of the Farming Community</i>
Tuesday	04/02/2014	18:41	<i>Second Stage: Reservoirs Bill (NIA 31/11-15)</i> <i>Final Stage: Public Service Pensions Bill (NIA 23/11-15)</i>
Monday	10/02/2014	20:14	<i>Motion: Supply Resolution for the 2013-2014 Spring Supplementary Estimates</i> <i>Motion: Supply Resolution for the 2014-2015 Vote on Account</i> <i>First Stage: Budget Bill (NIA 32/11-15)</i> <i>Further Consideration Stage: Tobacco Retailers Bill (NIA 19/11-15)</i> <i>Motion: Safer Internet Day 2014 Campaign</i>
Tuesday	11/02/2014	21:37	<i>Further Consideration Stage: Carrier Bags Bill (NIA 20/11-15)</i> <i>Final Stage: Health and Social Care (Amendment) Bill (NIA 27/11-15)</i> <i>Consideration Stage: Financial Provisions Bill (NIA 22/11-15)</i> <i>Second Stage: Budget Bill</i>
Monday	17/02/2014	18:44	<i>Consideration Stage: Budget Bill (NIA 32/11-15)</i> <i>Motion: Report on Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes (NIA 150/11-15)</i> <i>Motion: Shared Education</i> <i>Motion: Remote Sensing Inspections</i>
Monday	24/02/2014	20:19	<i>Further Consideration Stage: Financial Provisions Bill (NIA 22/11-15)</i> <i>Final Stage: Budget Bill (NIA 32/11-15)</i> <i>Motion: Key Services for Rural Communities</i> <i>Motion: Climate Change and its Impact on Flooding</i>
Tuesday	25/02/2014	19:19	<i>Further Consideration Stage: Carrier Bags Bill (NIA 20/11-15)</i> <i>Motion: Reclassification of Guide Dogs</i> <i>Motion: Financial Support to Expand Credit Union Services</i>

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Monday	03/03/2014	18:22	Public Petition: Ovarian Cancer Awareness Campaign Assembly Consent Motion: Draft Public Bodies (Abolition of the National Consumer Council and Transfer of the Office of Fair Trading's Functions in relation to Estate Agents etc) Order 2014 Motion: The Rates (Regional Rates) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 Motion: Report on the Review into Electricity Policy, Part 2: Electricity Pricing (NIA 147/11-15) Motion: Pulse Oximetry Motion: Fiscal Powers
Tuesday	11/03/2014	19:09	Motion: Drawdown of European Union Funds Motion: BBC Spotlight Programme on Waste Disposal
Monday	18/03/2014	21:52	Consideration Stage: Local Government Bill (NIA 28/11-15)
Wednesday	19/03/2014	22:53	Consideration Stage: Local Government Bill (NIA 28/11-15)
Monday	31/03/2014	18:04	Motion: The Pneumoconiosis, etc., (Workers' Compensation) (Payment of Claims) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 Motion: The Mesothelioma Lump Sum Payments (Conditions and Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 Motion: Animal Cruelty Motion: Tackling the Gender Imbalance in the Senior Civil Service
Tuesday	01/04/2014	23:23	Further Consideration Stage: Local Government Bill (NIA 28/11-15)
Monday	07/04/2014	19:26	Final Stage: Licensing of Pavement Cafés Bill (NIA 24/11-15) Motion: Assembly Committees European Priorities 2014 Report Motion: Report on the Review of Petitions of Concern Motion: Salary of the Comptroller and Auditor General Motion: Prayer of Annulment Civil Service Compensation Scheme (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2014
Tuesday	08/04/2014	19:11	Legislative Consent Motion: Consumer Rights Bill Second Stage: Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill (NIA 33/11-15) Final Stage: Local Government Bill (NIA 28/11-15)

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in <i>italics</i>)¹
Tuesday	27/05/2014	18:55	Second Stage: Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill Motion: The draft Local Government (Transitional, Supplementary, Incidental Provisions and Modifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 Motion: The draft Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors Legislative Consent Motion: Finance (No. 2) Bill Motion: Review of the Current Organisation of the Business Week of the Northern Ireland Assembly
Monday	02/06/2014	18:35	Motion: Prayer of Annulment Social Security (Habitual Residence) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 Motion: Area Planning in the Education Sector Motion: Commemorating the Centenary of the Great War
Monday	09/06/2014	18:24	Motion: Social Security Benefits Up-rating Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 Motion: Supply Resolution Main Estimates 2014/15 First Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill 2014
Tuesday	10/06/2014	20:41	Motion: Employment Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 Second Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill 2014
Tuesday	17/06/2014	18:17	Further Consideration Stage: Budget (No.2) Bill 2014 Motion: Amend Standing Order 37 - Exceptional Further Consideration Stage Motion: Amend Standing Order 31 - Exceptional Further Consideration Stage Motion: Amend Standing Order 35 - Exceptional Further Consideration Stage Motion: Report of the Committee for Education on its Inquiry into the Education and Training Inspectorate and the School Improvement Process (NIA 132/11-15) Motion: Integrated Education
Tuesday	24/06/2014	20:00	Second Stage: Justice Bill
Monday	08/09/2014	18:12	Motion: Ardoyne Fleadh Motion: Report on the Inquiry into the Barroso Taskforce (NIA 179/11-15)
Tuesday	16/09/2014	19:29	Public Petition: Elective Home Education Consideration Stage: Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill Motion: Altnagelvin Hospital
Monday	22/09/2014	18:17	Motion: Development Proposals from the Western Education and Library Board Motion: Replacement of the Current 2011-2015 Budget

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in italics)¹
Monday	13/10/2014	19:07	Motion: All-Party Motion of thanks to the Speaker Final Stage: Legal Aid and Coroners' Courts Bill (NIA 33/11-15) Motion: Review of Supported Living for Older People
Tuesday	14/10/2014	19:45	Motion: The draft Lands Tribunal (Salaries) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 Second Stage: Education Bill
Monday	20/10/2014	01:54	Consideration Stage: Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill (NIA Bill 26/11-15)
Tuesday	21/10/2014	21:30	Motion: The draft Local Government (Indemnities for Members and Officers) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 Second Stage: Off-street Parking (Functions of District Councils) Bill (NIA Bill 40/11-16) Consideration Stage: Education Bill (NIA Bill 38/11-16)
Monday	03/11/2014	18:52	Public Petition: Rail the Way for Armagh Motion: Review of Waiting Times for Elective Care Motion: Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month
Tuesday	04/11/2014	21:58	Legislative Consent Motion: Childcare Payments Bill Motion: Prayer of Annulment - The Road Traffic Offenders (Additional Offences) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (S.R. 2014/230) Motion: Prayer of Annulment - The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Offences) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (S.R. 2014/231) Motion: Prayer of Annulment - The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (S.R. 2014/232) Motion: Prayer of Annulment - The Road Traffic (Financial Penalty Deposit) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (S.R. 2014/233) Motion: Prayer of Annulment - The Road Traffic (Financial Penalty Deposit) (Appropriate Amount) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 (S.R. 2014/234) Motion: BBC Spotlight Programme 14 October 2014
Tuesday	11/11/2014	18:56	Second Stage: Food Hygiene Rating Bill Consideration Stage: Work and Families Bill Further Consideration Stage: Education Bill
Tuesday	18/11/2014	19:38	Second Stage: Pensions Bill (NIA Bill 42/11-16) Motion: Commonwealth Youth Games Motion: Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland's Report 'Appreciating Age'

Day	Date	Time Adjourned	Summary of Main Business (Stages of Primary Legislation in italics)¹
Monday	24/11/2014	18:33	Public Petition: Putting Patients First Further Consideration Stage: Work and Families Bill (NIA Bill 34/11-16) Motion: Child Support Fees Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 Motion: Child Support (Ending Liability in Existing Cases and Transition to New Calculation Rules) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 Motion: Public Accounts Committee Reports and Memoranda of Reply Motion: Anniversary of the Murder of Paul Quinn Motion: Contribution made by the Post Office Network

Notes:

1. For brevity, procedural motions, question time and adjournment debates have been omitted.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

Paper 000/00

12 November 2014

NIAR 759-14

Michael Potter

Job Sharing, Twinning and Zipping: Applications to Northern Ireland

1 Introduction

This paper has been prepared in the context of the review by the Assembly and Executive Review Committee into women in politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly¹.

During the meeting of 4 November 2014, clarification was sought by the Committee on how certain measures to encourage more participation of women in politics might be applied to Northern Ireland. The paper briefly summarises the political system in Northern Ireland, then considers job sharing, twinning and zipping as possible mechanisms for increasing women's participation in politics.

2 The Political System of Northern Ireland

The operation of the Northern Ireland Assembly is provided for in Part IV of the Northern Ireland Act 1998². Sections 33 and 34 of the Act provide for the manner of conducting elections to the Assembly.

1 Review into 'Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly': <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Assembly-Business/Committees/Assembly-and-Executive-Review/Reviews/Women-in-Politics-and-the-Northern-Ireland-Assembly/>.

2 Northern Ireland Act 1998: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/47/contents>.

Section 33 states:

- 33 Constituencies and numbers of members.
- (1) The members of the Assembly shall be returned for the parliamentary constituencies in Northern Ireland.
 - (2) Each constituency shall return six members.

Section 34 states:

- 34 Elections and franchise.
- (1) This section applies to elections of members of the Assembly, including by-elections.
 - (2) Each vote in the poll at an election shall be a single transferable vote.
 - (3) A single transferable vote is a vote—
 - (a) capable of being given so as to indicate the voter's order of preference for the candidates for election as members for the constituency; and
 - (b) capable of being transferred to the next choice when the vote is not needed to give a prior choice the necessary quota of votes or when a prior choice is eliminated from the list of candidates because of a deficiency in the number of votes given for him.

Elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly are an excepted matter under Schedule 2 of the Act.

3 Measures to Increase Women's Participation

The section briefly considers the implementation of job sharing, twinning and zipping as potential mechanisms that political parties can use to increase the number of female candidates for election to the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002³ excludes political candidate selection from the provisions of the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976⁴. The 2002 Act exempts political parties from sex discrimination provisions of the 1976 Order under the following conditions (Article 43A(2) of the 1976 Order):

- (2) This Article applies to arrangements made by a registered political party which—
 - (a) regulate the selection of the party's candidates in a relevant election, and
 - (b) are adopted for the purpose of reducing inequality in the numbers of men and women elected, as candidates of the party, to be members of the body concerned

Job Sharing

Job sharing in political representation appears to be untested in the context of legislatures in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Two candidates stood on one mandate for elections to the Scottish Parliament in 1999, but were unsuccessful. A Private Member's Bill was introduced in the House of Commons in 2012 to provide for two candidates to stand for a single mandate, but this fell due to lack of time⁵.

Suggestions for the introduction of job sharing in the Northern Ireland Assembly have been made in the past⁶, but how this would work in practice has not been explored in depth.

3 Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/2/contents>.

4 Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1976/1042/contents>.

5 For arguments for and against job sharing in politics, see Research and Library Service Research Paper 106/14 Job Sharing in Political Representation 24 October 2014: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RalSe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/10614.pdf.

6 For example, Margaret Ward (2000), *The Northern Ireland Assembly and Women: assessing the gender deficit*, Belfast: Democratic Dialogue: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/dd/papers/women-assembly.htm>.

Applying job sharing to the Northern Ireland Assembly, following an appropriate amendment to the Northern Ireland Act, would entail two members standing for a single mandate as one of the six members returned per constituency. How the arrangement might work in practice would be a matter primarily for the provisions of the legislative amendment⁷, but also for the nature of the agreement between the two candidates.

Twinning

'Twinning' is the practice of parties selecting candidates in constituencies in tandem, one female and one male. Used across all constituencies a party might contest, the same number of female as male candidates would stand. This mechanism was used by the Labour Party for elections to the National Assembly for Wales in 1998⁸. 'Twinning' is contingent on an appropriate party mechanism, such as centralised candidate selection or agreements between local party offices to 'twin'.

In theory, 'twinning' can be extended to more than two constituencies, where female and male candidates are equalised across clusters of electoral districts. The success of 'twinning' to increase the number of women elected to a legislature is dependent on the female candidate in the 'twinning' arrangement standing in a winnable seat⁹.

Elections using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system in Northern Ireland could use 'twinning' by arranging candidate selection agreements between constituencies to pair male and female candidates.

Zippering

'Zippering' is the practice of alternating women and men on party lists. They are usually associated with proportional systems. 'Zippering' has been used by Plaid Cymru in elections to the National Assembly for Wales¹⁰. Wales has an Additional Member System (AMS) with 40 Members elected by first past the post and 20 on a regional proportional party list system. It is this latter element that enables the use of 'zippering'.

'Zippering' ensures that equal numbers of women and men appear as candidates on party lists, but depending on the number of lists from which elected representatives are chosen in a system, it may matter whether a male or a female candidate appears first on a list. For example, if a party can expect one candidate to be elected from each regional or constituency list across an election, there may still be no women elected if men are first on each list.

Northern Ireland does not have a proportional party list system, therefore the traditional use of 'zippering' may not be applicable to Northern Ireland. However, where a party selects more than one candidate for the six-member constituencies of Northern Ireland, a 'zippering' system could in theory be used, although the electorate would be choosing individuals from the candidates selected, rather than parties guaranteeing a gender balance in representation among those elected.

7 For an example of a text for legislation in this respect, see Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Bill 2012-13: <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2012-13/representationofthepeoplemembersjobshare.html>.

8 'Welsh Labour Votes for Sex Equality', BBC News 17 May 1998: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/politics/95082.stm>.

9 Pippa Norris and Mona Lena Krook (2011), *Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan*, Vienna: OSCE, p.25.

10 Electoral Reform Society (2011), *Women's Representation in Scotland and Wales*, London: ERS, p.9.

Other Methods

There are other mechanisms for increasing the number of female candidates presented to an electorate that might be applicable to Northern Ireland¹¹. An example is all-women shortlists, where the list of candidates presented for selection by a party for a particular constituency comprises only women.

In addition, parties could adopt rules regarding the replacement of Members when they leave the Assembly, for example due to resignation or decease. In this case, parties might commit to co-opt only women, for example, or at least ensure female Members are not replaced by males.

Analysis of party candidate selection in Northern Ireland concludes that most of the main parties rely on local selection processes, where candidates are selected by constituency associations with less party elite control. This means that it is more problematic to apply a common candidate selection policy across a political party¹².

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- 11 For a range of mechanisms for increasing the representation of women, see Chapter 4 of Research and Information Service Research Paper 09/14 Women in the Northern Ireland Assembly, 3 September 2013: http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/0914.pdf.
- 12 Neil Matthews (2014) 'Gendered Candidate Selection and the Representation of Women in Northern Ireland', *Parliamentary Affairs* 67, 617–646.
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