Evaluating Barriers to Entering the Assembly

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Evaluating Barriers to Entering the Assembly:

What Prevents Us From Standing?

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National Assembly for Wales' Independent Remuneration Board Barriers to Entering the Assembly:
What Prevents Us From Standing?

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Executive Summary

A research team from Bangor University was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the barriers to entering the Assembly. The main aim was to better understand what, if any, deterrents there are for individuals with the necessary commitment and ability to stand for election.

We sought to:

1. Understand the aspects of the job that make it attractive, such as background and motivations.

2. Understand aspects that may deter individuals or groups of people from standing.

3. Consider the current remuneration package in influencing decisions to stand

4. Consider issues of capacity (for example, office and staffing allowances, training and legal awareness)

5. Consider geographical location; such as distance between the constituency and Cardiff.

The work was completed over a two-month period using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis and involved in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of 20 individuals.

We conducted a thematic analysis of the interview material. We undertook a quantitative analysis of the fixed choice questions. The findings informed the development number of potential actions for further discussion and consideration by the Remuneration Board:

- Keep under review salary level and percentage rise o ensure that the salary remains competitive and attractive in light of the potential barriers highlighted in this report.
- Publish more detail, for example, the number of miles an Assembly Member has covered instead of simply quoting the expenses claimed for travel, would better illustrate to the public where that money has gone.
- Differentiate more clearly between money that is paid to the Assembly Member as salary and money that the Assembly Member uses on such things as office expenses and staff salaries.
- Publish a monthly newsletter (as suggested by an Assembly Member) to include a breakdown of expenses to inform the electorate how the money is being spent.
- Consider the introduction of a childcare voucher allowance, and increased support at evenings and weekends to enable parents of young children to attend necessary events and meetings.
- Explore approaches for best practice in relation to resettlement grants.
- Increase the awareness of resettlement grants amongst Assembly Members, candidates, and potential candidates.
- Consider the support offered to individuals with caring responsibilities.

- Take into account the increased mileage that is incurred by Members from some regions in Wales
- Consider adjustments to housing allowances to enable those Members with young families to have their family with them, should they choose to.
- Enable choice about where the AM's main home is
- Investigate ways in which the Assembly can be seen to engage more with the public generally.
- Consult disabled Members about their individual needs.
- Undertake further more detailed research with a greater number and broader range of stakeholders.
- Explore how the barriers identified can be best addressed.

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Evaluating Barriers to Entering the Assembly

Introduction

A research team from Bangor University was commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the barriers to entering the Assembly. The main aim was to better understand what, if any, deterrents there are for individuals with the necessary commitment and ability to stand for election.

We were interested to explore the aspects of the job that make it attractive and those that deter individuals or groups of people from standing. Of particular interest were the current remuneration package and the distance between the constituency and Cardiff. In total 20 individuals agreed to be interviewed. This purposive sample included stakeholders from each of the five regions in Wales and each of the main political parties and independent candidates. We invited Assembly Members, former Members, prospective and former candidates, party officials and electoral officers to take part. We sought to:

6. Understand the aspects of the job that make it attractive, such as background and motivations.
7. Understand aspects that may deter individuals or groups of people from standing.
8. Consider the current remuneration package in influencing decisions to stand
9. Consider issues of capacity (for example, office and staffing allowances, training and legal awareness)
10. Consider geographical location; such as distance between the constituency and Cardiff.

The Remuneration Board

In 2009, an Independent Review Panel published its report, *Getting it Right for Wales,* with recommendations on how to improve financial support for Assembly Members.[1] The Report recommended that an Independent Review Body should undertake decisions regarding 'all aspects of financial support for Assembly Members'.[2] Established in 2010, the Independent Remuneration Board (the Board)

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[1] National Assembly for Wales Independent Review Panel, *Getting it Right for Wales* (July 2009).
[2] National Assembly for Wales Independent Review Panel, *Getting it Right for Wales* (July 2009) 4, Recommendation 12.

has the statutory responsibility to determine Assembly Members' pay and allowances under section 3 of the Measure.[3] The Board has a statutory duty to ensure that the level of remuneration does not, on financial grounds, deter persons with the necessary commitment and ability from seeking election to the Assembly.[4]

As part of their first Determination, the Board noted the considerations they had taken into account to provide sustainable arrangements.

> "We have aimed to ensure that the remuneration available to Members reflects the nature of their roles; should not deter any suitable candidates from standing for financial reasons; provides Members with adequate resources; and ensures that public money is appropriately spent with regard to probity, accountability, value for money and transparency."[5]

The Determination at the time this work was undertaken, was updated in July 2013 and supersedes the Determination made in 2012.[6]

UK Context

Matters of how to support elected representatives' through pay, expenses and allowances have been a concern for all UK legislative institutions in recent years. This has led to several reports and reforms in the UK and devolved institutions. The main principles and issues are similar for each, even if there are differing approaches.

Although the Westminster expenses scandal in 2009 has had a widespread effect on the public, consideration of remuneration reform was already being undertaken in all parts of the UK.[7] For example, a review of financial support in the National Assembly

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[3] The National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 (nawm 4).
[4] The National Assembly for Wales (Remuneration) Measure 2010 (nawm 4) section 3(2)(a)(ii)
[5] Report of the Remuneration Board for the National Assembly for Wales, *Fit for Purpose* (March, 2011) [56].
[6] National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board, *Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances* (July 2013).
[7] Following the MP expenses scandal in 2009 major reforms were introduced by the UK Parliament. Responsibility for expenses was transferred to the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) in May 2010 by the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009. Responsibility for determining pay was transferred to IPSA in May 2011 and subsequently to determine pensions in October 2011. Concurrent with the establishment of the IPSA the Committee on Standards for Public Life conducted its own review and published its report *MPs' Expenses and Allowances: Supporting Parliament, Safeguarding the Taxpayer* in November 2009. As it set out the principles that should underlie the system of expenses it highlighted that arrangements should accommodate all sections of society. "Arrangements should be flexible enough to take account of the diverse working patterns and demands placed upon individual MPs, and should not unduly deter representation from all sections of

for Wales was already underway.[8] Similar reviews had also been undertaken at UK level[9] and for the devolved institutions in Northern Ireland[10] and Scotland.[11]

Official reports illustrate two perspectives: general aspects of representation and functional aspects of remuneration. The *Speaker's Conference (on Parliamentary Representation)* considered general aspects of representation, such as citizen engagement; the role of political parties, selection processes and their implications for women; black and minority ethnic candidates; disabled candidates; and changing the culture of Parliament regarding support for families.[12] Such reports consider social issues beyond those of remuneration alone.[13] The Committee on Standards in Public Life in their report *MPs' Expenses and Allowances: Supporting Parliament, Safeguarding the Taxpayer* in 2009[14] tends to take more of a functional approach towards remuneration, which focuses on how the system should be arranged in practice so that it is flexible enough so as to 'not deter'[15] or to 'not unduly deter'[16] suitable candidates from all sections of society. There is recognition of the need to balance the arrangements of remuneration schemes with their effects on representation.

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society." 34; see also, House of Commons Library, *Members' Pay and Expenses - Current Rates from 1 April 2013* (Research Paper 13/33, 31 May 2013).

[8] National Assembly for Wales Independent Review Panel, *Getting it Right for Wales* (July 2009) [2.1].

[9] Review Body on Senior Salaries, *Review of Parliamentary Pay, Pensions and Allowances 2007* (Volume 1, Report No.64, Cm7270-1, January 2008).

[10] Review Body on Senior Salaries, *Northern Ireland Assembly: Review of Pay, Pensions and Allowances 2008* (Report No.67, November 2008); In this report the SSRB recommended that both the pay and expenses of members should be recommended by an independent body. Accordingly, amendments were made to sections 47 and 48 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, by the Northern Ireland Assembly Members Act 2010, to allow the Assembly to delegate these functions to an independent body which the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission proposed to establish. The Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standards) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 established the Independent Financial Review Panel. Its functions under section 2 of that Act are to make determinations as to salaries, pensions, gratuities and allowances. Its current determination was published in March 2012 which will continue until 2016.

[11] Allowances Review Panel, *Independent Review of Parliamentary Allowances: Report to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body on the Reimbursement of Expenses for Members of The Scottish Parliament* (March 2008).

[12] House of Commons, *Speaker's Conference (on Parliamentary Representation) Final Report* (6 January 2010, HC239-I).

[13] ibid [15].

[14] Committee on Standards in Public Life, *MPs' Expenses and Allowances: Supporting Parliament, Safeguarding the Taxpayer* (November 2009, Twelfth Report, Cm7724).

[15] Report of the Remuneration Board for the National Assembly for Wales, *Fit for Purpose* (March, 2011) [56].

[16] Committee on Standards in Public Life, *MPs' Expenses and Allowances: Supporting Parliament, Safeguarding the Taxpayer* (November 2009, Twelfth Report, Cm7724) 34.

Context in Wales

The principle underlying UK remuneration systems has been adapted from the one set out in earlier reports by the UK Review Body on Senior Salaries (SSRB) and developed further by them in their *Review of Parliamentary Pay, Pensions and Allowances 2007*.[17] Similar principles underpin the systems of pay, allowance and expenses in Wales,[18] Northern Ireland[19] and Scotland.[20] In Wales, two independent reports, *Assembly Members' Salaries* in March 2008[21] and *Getting it Right for Wales* in July 2009, included significant recommendations.[22] Subsequently, the Remuneration Board for Wales published its first Determination in 2011. This was accompanied by a report, *Fit for Purpose*, to explain the background and reasons for their first Determination.[23]

The Hansard Society conducted research with Assembly Members at the beginning of the fourth Assembly to find out more about the experience of newly elected Members. It published a briefing, *Assembly Line? The Experience and Development of new Assembly Members* in 2013.[24] The briefing considers the general aspects of the daily workload of an Assembly Member and the experience and level of satisfaction of those newly elected in 2011. It reflects some issues of remuneration, and salary in particular.[25]

Getting it Rights for Wales concluded that the pay levels at the time were appropriate and that they were 'sufficient to attract a wide range of able and well-motivated candidates to become Assembly Members.'[26]

In the SSRB review of parliamentary pay in 2007, some MPs expressed concern that some people 'in the professional middle income range' could be deterred from standing for election 'by the salary and lack of pay progression.'[27] As a result there

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[17] Review Body on Senior Salaries, *Review of Parliamentary Pay, Pensions and Allowances 2007* (Volume 1, Report No.64, Cm7270-1, January 2008).
[18] National Assembly for Wales Independent Review Panel, *Getting it Right for Wales* (July 2009) [1.14]; Report of the Remuneration Board for the National Assembly for Wales, *Fit for Purpose* (March, 2011) [56].
[19] Review Body on Senior Salaries, *Northern Ireland Assembly: Review of Pay, Pensions and Allowances 2008* (Report No.67, November 2008) [1.23].
[20] Allowances Review Panel, *Independent Review of Parliamentary Allowances: Report to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body on the Reimbursement of Expenses for Members of The Scottish Parliament* (March 2008) 4.
[21] The First Report of the Review Panel on Financial Support for Assembly Members, *Assembly Members' Salaries* (March 2008).
[22] National Assembly for Wales Independent Review Panel, *Getting it Right for Wales* (July 2009).
[23] Report of the Remuneration Board for the National Assembly for Wales, *Fit for Purpose* (March, 2011).
[24] Hansard Society, *Assembly Line? The Experience and Development of new Assembly Members* (2013).
[25] ibid 8.
[26] National Assembly for Wales Independent Review Panel, *Getting it Right for Wales* (July 2009) [5.38].
[27] Review Body on Senior Salaries, *Review of parliamentary pay, pensions and allowances 2007* (Volume 1, Report No.64, Cm7270-1, January 2008) [2.3]; see also [3.7].

was a concern that this would predominantly attract only those earning less than £60,000, and/or those who could afford to take the reduction in salary down to this level.[28] The SSRB came to a similar conclusion in their review of the Northern Ireland Assembly where they were 'mindful that reward may have an impact on the number and quality of candidates.'[29] In particular, they raised concerns in terms of equality that there were a lack of candidates 'from a wide range of backgrounds' and that there was 'speculation that pay levels might be a deterrent for some.'[30]

In relation to the Welsh Assembly, the Hansard Society noted that for half of their respondents of newly elected Members in the fourth Assembly becoming an AM meant a salary increase; of £30,000 a year or more for two Members. While for the other half it was a decrease or no change, with two Members experiencing a salary decrease of £30,000 a year or more.[31] However, they were clear to note that this 'was not a source of complaint'.[32]

The salary (at the time of writing) for Assembly Members is £53,852.[33] Additional salaries are available to Members who are also office holders.[34] A four-year pay freeze was agreed for the period of the fourth Assembly which began in May 2011.[35] The term of the fourth Assembly was extended for a year beyond 2015. Consequently, the Remuneration Board for Wales decided to increase the basic salary by 1% up to £54,390 for 2015-16.[36] The Board indicated an intention to conduct a further exercise to consider salaries before the fifth Assembly.[37]

The Hansard Society briefing also considers issues of capacity within the Assembly. Capacity includes Assembly Members' support and allowances in terms of their office, employing and training staff; their own personal experiences of the training they received from both the Assembly and their party groups at the time of their election; and accommodation. The Remuneration Board for Wales has published its *Review of Assembly Member Staffing and Support Staff Pay* which addresses some

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[28] ibid [2.3].
[29] ibid [2.7].
[30] Review Body on Senior Salaries, *Northern Ireland Assembly: Review of Pay, Pensions and Allowances 2008* (Report No.67, November 2008) [2.3].
[31] Hansard Society, *Assembly Line? The Experience and Development of new Assembly Members* (2013) 8.
[32] ibid 8.
[33] National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board, *Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances* (July 2013) [3.1.1].
[34] ibid [3.1.3].
[35] National Assembly for Wales, 'Four-year pay freeze for Assembly Members' (12 November 2010) <http://assemblywales.org/newhome/archive-news/new-news-third-assembly.htm?act=dis&id=202767&ds=11/2010> accessed 13 July 2014.
[36] Remuneration Board of the National Assembly for Wales, *Annual Report 2013-14* (July 2014) [20].
[37] Ibid. [19].

of these issues in more detail.[38] *Getting it Rights for Wales* considered that 'capacity issue and its effect on Members' workload could deter potential candidates from standing for election.'[39]

An example of such an issue that could deter potential candidates is accommodation allowances. The Committee on Standards in Public Life highlighted that systems of accommodation allowances should be flexible for those with 'families, disabilities, or other particular needs, so as not to discourage them from seeking to enter Parliament.'[40]Similar views were reflected by Assembly Members in 2009. Especially, they noted that arrangements should not 'penalise' Members who live outside Cardiff and that consideration should be given to families and security.[41] Otherwise, they noted, it could prove difficult for people with family commitments and that could impact on young women in particular.[42]

For the purpose of calculating the amount of housing allowance there are three different tiers based on whether the main home of the Assembly Member is within the inner area, the intermediate area or the outer area.[43] Members within the inner area may claim up to a maximum of £1,425 for overnight stays in Cardiff. Members within the intermediate area may claim up to £3,420. Members in the outer area may select from four options of how to arrange accommodation. Option A is for renting furnished property.[44] Option B is for expenses in relation to a home in Cardiff provided at the Member's own expense.[45] Option C allows claims for other overnight accommodation which is an alternative to A or B of up to £8,400.[46] Option D is a transitional provision with a maximum allowance of £8,400.[47] There is also provision to claim for overnight stays away from Cardiff if required.[48]

It appears, from the Hansard Society research, that some new Assembly Members were 'dissatisfied' with the properties available in Cardiff at the £700 per month limit and these provisions did not reach their expectations.[49] Members have also

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[38] Independent Remuneration Board for Wales, *Review of Assembly Member Staffing and Support Staff Pay* (December 2013).
[39] National Assembly for Wales Independent Review Panel, *Getting it Right for Wales* (July 2009) [4.2]
[40] Committee on Standards in Public Life, *MPs' Expenses and Allowances: Supporting Parliament, Safeguarding the Taxpayer* (November 2009, Twelfth Report, Cm7724) [5.19]
[41] National Assembly for Wales Independent Review Panel, *Getting it Right for Wales* (July 2009) [6.16]-[6.18]
[42] Ibid. [6.18]
[43] National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board, *Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances* (July 2013) [4.1.2].
[44] ibid [4.4.2].
[45] ibid [4.4.6].
[46] ibid [4.4.8].
[47] ibid [4.4.9].
[48] ibid [4.5].
[49] Hansard Society, *Assembly Line? The Experience and Development of new Assembly Members* (2013) 14-15.

expressed concern to the Remuneration Board for Wales that 'rises in the market for rented properties had outstripped adjustments to the allowance.'[50] Subsequently, the Board decided to increase the maximum allowance for those in the outer areas to £8,820 (£735 per calendar month).[51]

Assembly Members are entitled to an Office Cost Allowance to cover the expense of running an office and engaging with constituents.[52] Prior to 2014-15 Members could claim £16,697 for an office in the Member's constituency or region, or £4,174 if they use the office facilities in Tŷ Hywel.[53] For 2014-15, the allowance will increase to £17,014 in line with the forecast rise in the Consumer Price Index.[54]

Political Culture and Representation

Political research has focused more on the financial implications of being a candidate rather than the financial implications once elected. Norris and Franklin highlight the factors that candidates face in terms of a supply and demand model. On the 'supply' side, the motivation of a candidate and their political capital, including financial resources, influence whether they choose to stand. The 'demand' is determined by party rules and attitudes of those selecting candidates. This is set in the context of the structure of opportunities which is determined through legal regulations, the electoral system and political culture.[55] Norris and Lovenduski further highlight the challenges of the supply side and the path of a political career as 'risky, gruelling and unglamorous' which requires 'stamina, optimism and dedication'.[56] They point out the significance of occupations which give potential candidates these opportunities through motivations and resources.

> "Those aspiring to Parliament need professions which allow them, at an early age, flexibility over time-management, financial security, transferable skills, horizontal mobility and the possibility of interrupted career paths. These occupation minimize the costs and maximise the opportunities associated with the risks of a political life."[57]

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[50] Remuneration Board of the National Assembly for Wales, *Annual Report 2013-14* (July 2014) [31].
[51] ibid [32].
[52] National Assembly for Wales Remuneration Board, *Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances* (July 2013) [6.1.1]
[53] Ibid. [6.1.3]
[54] Remuneration Board of the National Assembly for Wales, *Annual Report 2013-14* (July 2014) [28]
[55] P.Norris & M.Franklin, *Social Representation* [2003] 32(2) European Journal of Political Research 185, 186.
[56] P.Norris & J.Lovenduski, *'If Only More Candidates Came Forward': Supply-Side Explanations of Candidate Selection in Britain* [1993] 23(3) British Journal of Political Science 373, 380.
[57] ibid 405-406.

The Hansard Society similarly draws attention to barriers regarding seeking selection and then actually fighting the election.[58] It points out that the average cost for the new Members in 2011 for seeking election was £1,200 and a further cost of £2,900 for standing in the election.[59] Additionally, there could also be loss of earnings while running the campaign.[60] The briefing notes that although this cost is considerably lower than those seeking a Westminster seat it still raises 'some concerns about the accessibility of public office to those who have limited resources.'[61] Further:

> "Would-be Assembly Members need flexibility in their work and home lives to seek selection, need to be able to give up their jobs (in most circumstances) to fight the election itself, and need to be able to invest around £4,000 of their own money in the process. Clearly, not every aspirant Assembly Member in Wales will have such resources at their disposal."[62]

As a result, the Hansard Society suggested that political parties and the remuneration board for Wales need to consider how candidates can be supported with selection and election so that membership is 'fully accessible to people regardless of financial means'.[63]

This can be related to the development of inclusiveness as a key principle for the Assembly as discussed by Chaney and Favre who consider, in particular, participation of women; the disabled and ethnic minorities; equality of opportunity; and consensual politics.[64] For example, childcare and flexible working practices were seen as a positive consequence of having more women members.[65] This is also related to mechanisms used by political parties to encourage more women candidates such as twinning and all women shortlists, as highlighted by Charles and Jones in *'Grey Men in Grey Suits': Gender and Political Representation in Local Government*.[66]

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[58] Hansard Society, *Assembly Line? The Experience and Development of new Assembly Members* (2013) 9.
[59] ibid 9.
[60] ibid 9.
[61] ibid 9.
[62] ibid 9-10.
[63] ibid 10.
[64] Paul Chaney & Ralph Fevre, *Ron Davies and the Cult of 'Inclusiveness': Devolution and Participation in Wales* [2001] 14 Contemporary Wales 21, 31.
[65] S.Betts, J.Borland and P.Chaney, *Inclusive Government for Excluded Groups: Women and Disabled People* in P.Chaney, T.Hall & A.Pithouse (Eds.) 'New Governance, New Democracy?' (University of Wales Press, 2001) 54.
[66] Nickie Charles & Stephanie Jones, *'Grey Men in Grey Suits': Gender and Political Representation in Local Government* [2013] 26 Contemporary Wales 182 See also, M. Russell, J. Lovenduski & M. Stephenson, *Women's Political Participation in the UK* (UCL Constitution Unit, London: UCL Press, 2002) 13.

A 2003 report, *Public Appointments: Motivations and Prompts*, investigated what motivated and prompted people to apply for public appointments in Wales, and whether there were variations between groups defined by gender, age, race or disability.[67] Respondents were not motivated primarily by finance, however they did note that better payment would 'attract a more diverse set of applicants' but not necessarily ones that were more committed.[68] Remuneration issues were found to be a barrier for disabled candidates in particular.[69] The report highlighted 'size, geography, and the role of the Welsh language' as potential factors affecting the appointments process in Wales.[70]

Fit for Purpose by the Remuneration Board for Wales included an Equality Impact Screening[71] and the Board was also mindful that the Determination 'does not inadvertently disadvantage or unlawfully discriminate against persons with protected characteristics' under the Equality Act 2010.[72] The Board noted:

> "There is also an opportunity to promote equality and demonstrate to existing and prospective Assembly Members and their staff that the Determination is fair and equality considerations have been taken into account during its formulation. Any barriers to Members being able to perform their roles effectively in terms of the protected characteristics will be identified and addressed."[73]

The initial screening raised issues such as disability (in terms of Members, staff and constituents); pregnancy, maternity, co-parental and caring leave; housing flexibility; childcare provision; age; and sexual orientation.[74] There are duties inherent in the Government of Wales Act 2006 for the Assembly to ensure equality of opportunity and to have an 'inclusive approach to exercising its functions.'[75] Therefore, it could be argued that representation and inclusiveness have been factors in assessing issues of remuneration in Wales due to social and legal considerations.

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[67] Graham Day & Charlotte Williams, *Public Appointments: Motivations and Prompts: Final Report* (2003) 1.
[68] Report of the Remuneration Board for the National Assembly for Wales, *Fit for Purpose* (March, 2011) 16.
[69] ibid 31.
[70] ibid 19.
[71] ibid Appendix E.
[72] ibid Appendix E [3]; the characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sexual orientation; and sex.
[73] ibid Appendix E [4].
[74] ibid Appendix E [12]-[29].
[75] Government of Wales Act 2006, section 35, sections 72-79, and Schedule 2 para.8.

Method

The work was completed over a two month period using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and analysis. Following approval from the College of Business, Law, Education and Social Sciences Ethics Committee we invited Assembly Members, former Members, prospective and former candidates, party officials and electoral officers to take part in interviews.

We aimed to interview 16 people and achieved a sample of 20. The sample was purposive and cannot be considered as representative of the population of elected members or the population of people considering standing for election. It provides data rich examples of experience and perceptions of the individuals participating in the interviews.

An information sheet describing the research and detailing the areas of interest was sent to participants in advance. The sample included stakeholders from each of the five regions in Wales, as well as each of the main political parties and independent candidates. Interviews were conducted by telephone or face-to-face, and in the participants choice of Welsh or English.

Interviews were framed around a topic guide that drew on secondary research and considered remuneration and barriers to participation. Each interview was conducted in three phases. The first phase began with a generative question in order to elicit an uninterrupted narrative. This enabled the participant to define what they believed was relevant and important to them, their experiences and influences in considering standing for election or being involved in politics. In the second phase, the interviewer asked questions to clarify or extend issues raised in the narrative. In the final phase, the interviewer asked for thoughts on specific areas of interest including the pay, expenses, location, legal awareness, housing allowance and training.

A fixed response questionnaire was given consisting of 16 questions. This was followed by participants being asked to rank in their own words the three most important barriers to entering the National Assembly for Wales.

The readings of the interview scripts enabled themes to be identified including those emerging from the unstructured narrative and those informed by the schedule. Themes were organised and compared manually.

Participants were given assurances about confidentiality and anonymity. Data was anonymised and stored in accordance with data protection requirements. Adequate physical and electronic security of data was ensured and password protection on all

computers used, even though identifiers were removed. Data was accessed only by the research team.

Findings

There are two main parts to the findings. The first is based on an analysis of the semi-structured interviews and the second is based on an analysis of a brief fixed-response questionnaire.   The main characteristics of the 20 people we interviewed are detailed below. We have not cross-tabulated this information to avoid individuals being identified.

Interview Sample

Conservative	4
Independent	2
Labour	5
Liberal Democrat	2
Plaid Cymru	5
Electoral Officers	2
Males	13
Females	7
Current AM	8
Former AM	2
Prospective AM/Cllr	2
Councillor	4
Party Official	3
Electoral Officer	2

Semi-structured Interviews

The interview process elicited a rich and detailed data set. For the purposes of this report we have undertaken a thematic analysis. We have used verbatim quotes, whilst ensuring respondents anonymity, throughout the report to illustrate each theme. We consider the policy and practice implications of what emerged from the analysis of the data in the last section of the report. A more finely detailed analysis could be undertaken but is beyond the scope of this piece of commissioned

research. The sample size is small and the findings are inevitably indicative rather than representative.

Early Experiences and Motivations for Involvement in Politics

Most of the interviewees gave us some biographical information about their entry into political activity. For some their political interest started in their youth, as one AM reported.

> "I first got involved in politics at the age of 14, at school […] and I sort of renewed my interest when I was at university - I have been involved in politics all my adult life." (AM)

We heard about early experiences influenced subsequent participation in political work. For some this was expressed as part of their family's interests in politics and others drew on a particular event or set of circumstances that had sparked an interest in politics during their early adulthood. One person noted that their early exposure to politics made the decision to become involved uncomplicated and unremarkable as one interviewee commented.

> "My parents were actively involved in politics, so I guess I thought it was a normal thing to do…and if you were unhappy with the world then you should try and change it through a political structure. I was a member of my political party for a long time" (AM)

This experience was underpinned by a belief in a democratic political system, personal values and a family tradition of political participation. These sorts of early experience appeared to inform career choices and underpin motivations for subsequent political involvement, including standing for election.

For the majority of participants, existing community-level engagement was a common background subsequent involvement in politics. The opportunity to bring their own beliefs and philosophies to politics and to contribute to effecting change for the better is illustrated in the following quote.

> "I was heavily involved in the community in several different ways, [...] and then one night, I shouted at the television screen at something a politician was say, [...] and my [partner] simply said shut up or do something about it…so I did! So I joined the Party, started at the bottom [...] it was a life ambition" (AM)

> "I've always had strong views on what needs to be done in my community and in the country, so the logical position was to stand for election and change it,

so when I stood in my own community as a councillor and promote my own perspective" (AM)

This desire to make a difference was often situated within the context of their previous experiences, whether personal or through their professional life within the private or public sector.

"It was because of experiences of things that were run by the Welsh Government that I was not happy with, [...] Another influence was part of my former job, [...] I thought the best way of trying to do something about that was to try and stand for the National Assembly." (AM)

"[...] we have a view about the way we want to see society in general [...] and all of us who work in areas in the public service think, 'well actually, think I could do a better job myself', sounds incredibly arrogant [...] I was arrogant enough to think that I could make a positive contribution [...] in Wales, that's why you do it, because you've got a view of the way you want society to be organised and you want that view to prevail." (Former AM)

"To make a difference, [...] represent normal people's views and in my case it was business views, [...] and make those views known within the Assembly" (Former Candidate)

The motivation behind standing for election for some respondents arose because they were at a particular moment in their life that provided a new opportunity such as when their children became young adults. A number of interviewees referred to reaching a point where they wanted a new challenge in their life.

"I want to be contributing towards creating a fairer society, there's also because now the opportunity came to me now and the time is right now from a personal perspective, [...]it has got progressively easier as the kids grew up" (Candidate)

"My goals were to find a [partner], hopefully have a family, have a career, qualify, get involved in other activities in the community, and thereafter have a go at pursuing a political career. Sixteen years later I had done all of that, finished my degree, married, had children". (AM)

For others, the turning point came when they were approached and encouraged by members of their political party.

"I think they were struggling for a candidate and I stood and that's how it happened [...] wanted to make a difference, do something in my community…. and I wanted to help out in my local party as well. (Former Candidate)

At time of the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales, it was also regarded by some as presenting an opportunity to become involved on a new political platform not previously experienced in Wales.

"I remember that may day in 1997 and there was a manifesto commitment for a referendum for the National Assembly, [...] I thought it was a very exciting time in politics, a brand new institution and I thought I would want to be a part of that [...]. (Former AM)

A repeated theme was obligation or a duty to take the opportunity to get involved and to stand which some described as vocation and some individuals talked passionately about sacrifice and duty.

"It was an opportunity to contribute towards Wales' future and it was something I wished to do. It's something that someone has to do. Some of us possibly have felt the duty to do. I felt the duty to take the opportunity to try and play my part". (AM)

"We have to get good people in there and people who are willing to sacrifice things. They shouldn't have to sacrifice as much as they have to go to the Assembly. But in the situation as it is at the moment there's no option but to ask people who are willing to sacrifice things." (AM)

Diversity

There was strong support from interviewees for a diverse representation of people within the Assembly and involved in politics in general. One participant talked about a healthy democracy encouraging more people to participate. Enabling diversity was thought to be particularly pertinent during the establishment of the Assembly.

"I think it's important that people who go into it have experience [...] if we've got a mix of people, young people are fine. They might want to know what they are going to do next. If you have people with business and private sector background, that's quite good. [...] Wider representation would be better, women and young people representative of the people they represent" (Former Candidate)

"Personally, I think there needs to be a cross section of different ages, every gender, different backgrounds, [...] it would be a weaker place if only younger people went for it, but for me I think it is also a weaker place if just older people go for it." (Former Party Officer)

Career Politicians

Some of the people interviewed perceived an increasing professionalisation within the Assembly and pointed to the need to balance this with the involvement of people with a more diverse range of experience and background.

"[...] I think it's a perfectly acceptable route to do a politics degree […] looking for your own seat. Nothing inherently wrong with that but if that becomes the majority, I think we've got a real problem. You need people who have done real jobs, got a slice of life, rather than just working in politics, for all political parties. (Former AM)

"We see more career politicians now than used to be the case, although perhaps less so in the Assembly. I think there's more of a trend towards career politicians amongst MPs. People who, you know, they leave university and they actively want to be a politician [...] now they're becoming more of a mix of professional politicians, if you want to call it that." (Electoral Officer)

Resilience and Media Scrutiny

Many of the people we interviewed thought a degree of resilience was necessary to stand for election and be a politician. They linked this view to the levels of public and media scrutiny that appear to be part of public life. This was seen as one of the less positive aspects of politics and seen as a potential inhibiter to participation.

"Essentially, political media, [...] sort of see it as fair game, and attacking people for things they have done before they were candidates is….it's quite immoral really, but it is done [...] if you want the elected member to reflect the constituency, then you need a real person and the more we go down this route of attacking people's pasts, the more we are going to get robots standing as candidates." (Party Officer)

 "I found it quite difficult to manage the media and the press. I had a bit of bad press [...] that was difficult…its depends on who you are and how well you think you would cope with the press, there's quite a lot of pressure. It depends on the person." (Former Candidate)

> "I do think that you need to possess a certain degree of robustness –you have to have a clear idea of what you are doing, what you believe in and the tenacity to take that through. So you do need that toughness,[...]. You'll develop that anyway on the campaign trail, but when you get in office you sure as hell going to need it." (Former AM)

Self-confidence was thought to be an important characteristic for people considering standing. An understanding of the processes involved in the political system and previous experience of public life were considered useful in negotiating some of the challenges of standing. Interviewees acknowledged that not everyone is well equipped when they are nominated.

> "Having the confidence I guess to go to public office where you'd never done anything, I'd never done anything …I hadn't been a county councillor, never held a major public office….even coming from a fairly senior background in [public sector], there's always this thing, well can I actually crack the job? [...] am I actually capable of doing this job as it's such a high visibility job. So it think that there is an issue of confidence, especially for people like myself who come from a strong working class background, we're not people who are educated and borne to rule as it were." (Former AM)

> "I don't think the general public understand the party processes that take place, I don't think party members understand the processes that take place before you get nominated." (AM)

Although there were some challenging experiences talked about, the overall perception of working as an Assembly member and of being involved in politics in general, were characterised by feelings of satisfaction and enjoyment.

> "Working (as a minister) in the Assembly in Wales is one of the most intellectually interesting and challenging jobs I've ever done by some considerable margin [...] it is so intellectually interesting and the ability to bring one's own views and beliefs to play in policy, it's the greatest job in the world" (Former AM)

> "I think I have enough political and business experience to be quite objective about it. I absolutely love it, I would fully recommend it [...]" (AM)

Public Perceptions of politicians

A common view emerging from the interviews is the public perception of politicians as unpopular. Most interviewees commented that this was linked to the Westminster

expenses scandal despite the more transparent approach in the Assembly to payments and expenses. The suggestion was of a public that do not recognise greater transparency in Wales.

A small number thought that politicians have never been held in high regard as a generalised group of people but that this was counter to the experience of individuals in their local area.

> "Public's perceptions of politicians…let's be clear, there was never a golden age you know, politicians never did have the unadulterated respect from the public, but I think in recent years, the standing has gone right down" (Former AM)

> "Public perceptions in general of all politicians isn't very good, I think we need to be more transparent, more straightforward in the way we communicate [...] part and parcel of that is expenses, but in Wales anyway, not as much as an issue with Westminster anyway at that level." (Candidate)

Many of the participants considered the media as in part responsible for the way the public view Assembly Members. This was not confused with scrutiny of policies, which was perceived to be appropriate and welcomed. Concern was expressed about *ad hominem* attacks. The lack of positive reporting in the media was seen as a challenge and potentially a barrier to standing for election.

> "The problem is the media will not publish reports of cross-party working[...]at the moment one Member slips up here, or even one MP in Westminster slips up, we are all the same…and it ends up reinforcing perceptions. It's a tight rope, nonetheless we should not penalise people in choosing to stand for office" (AM)

> "What is now essentially a world of social media into politics, I think that makes a difference, […] if they've been a real person, made mistakes in the past, that can be a barrier now[...] is a shame because people make mistakes people learn and real people are possibly frightened to stand" (Party Officer)

The role of the media was not universally criticised. Participants noted the importance of positive stories, consensual politics and opportunities in promoting individual candidates. Availing of the latter was regarded as a greater challenge for independent candidates.

> "Press don't take you seriously as an independent. They go straight on the main parties, it's very hard to get press coverage [...] I think I got one article in the press, through the whole of the election campaign" (Former Councillor)

Many of the people we interviewed suggested when individuals enter a political career, they do so with full awareness of the implications, but not necessarily the skills, to engage constructively with the media.

> "There is the expectation that people in politics are larger than life. It takes 'balls' guts and determination and self-confidence to put yourself in the role in front of an audience" (Former Candidate)

> "They've got to have good media skills, which not everybody has [...] They need to be open, capable of receiving new ideas, able to challenge appropriately, have a capacity to absorb lots of detail that you wouldn't normally bother about" (Independent Councillor)

Public Perceptions of the Assembly

Most participants held a high regard for the Assembly as a political institution, and as referred to earlier, advocated the importance of greater participation in politics. For some the attraction to political life was linked to the increasing popular legitimacy of the Assembly itself. However, for some the downside of increased awareness by the public brought with it negative perceptions similar to the views about Westminster politicians.

> "One of the exciting things about the Assembly, with the Silk Commission going through, it can make it a much more attractive prospect for people, not just with ambition, for people who can actually visualise an improvement in their constituency, [...] and I think for all parties, the higher the quality of candidate the better for the constituency, …with greater powers comes greater candidates" (Party Officer)

Better communication with the public was offered as a solution by one person who emphasised the importance of being held to account despite the pervasive nature of the press.

> "The public perception is however very important, because ultimately that is how we are judged and how we are held to account. The public's perception is that we are all paid too much, we do not do enough work and why should we even need expenses to do our job. So we need to be a bit more honest in how we speak to the public about expenses in particular." (AM)

Public Disengagement

Some interviewees felt that public attitudes were a barrier to standing for election and for some this was influenced by the distance from Cardiff and lack of awareness of role of the Assembly in some areas of Wales, particularly where the constituency was far away from Cardiff.

> "It may be that people in North West Wales especially feel further removed from Cardiff and are less interested in the Assembly because of it, and […] less interest in the Assembly by seeing it to be Cardiff-based for that reason, and that probably impacts on the number of candidates that are interested in standing." (Electoral Officer)

> "There's a perception now that everything is kept very close in Cardiff Bay and that's it, and that is part of why I think there is still this lingering feeling in many quarters in Wales, well do we really need it?" (Councillor)

> "I feel the public perception of Assembly Members is one of a lack of clarity. You could go to a hairdresser for example; they say "What do you do?" You say you're an Assembly Member, "What is one of those?" they do not know. (AM)

Political Culture and Diversity

Many of the people we interviewed identified issues within political culture itself that could create barriers to entering the Welsh Assembly. Interviewees spoke about their own experiences as candidates or when there were considering standing and reflected on perceptions within their own party or within the general public of what a candidate should be.

Gender

A number of interviewees talked about what they referred to as a 'macho' or male dominated environment, and that as women and particularly as mothers they received negative comments about standing.

> "Whilst the situation was better in the Assembly than for Westminster, the male "party apparatchiks" held a lot of sway, and tended to select those they already knew or knew of. Women also tend to get left with the caring responsibilities, still, and oftentimes tend not to even put themselves forward." (AM)

"The fact that I'm a woman, a couple of comments in regard to what would happen when you settle down and have babies, how will you be able to be an Assembly member? I didn't see men having the kind of thing." (Former Candidate)

"I still think that we have a political system that's based on the premise that you're likely to be a man with a wife at home." (Former AM)

Some interviewees felt that more needed to be done by political parties at the selection stage.

"[…] I think there's the idea of leadership tends to be the male idea of leadership, which is they stand up and inspires everybody but that's not necessarily what leadership is all about and women bring another type of leadership." (Current Candidate)

Although in the past the Assembly has had a good reputation for gender equality, interviewees were concerned that this was diminishing.

"It's one of my greatest disappointments that we've been from a ground-breaking first in the western world 50-50 parliamentary body to… well it's now, we've dropped back to 40-60 and looking at the candidates already selected for the next elections, it looks like it's going to be worse." (Former AM)

Disabilities

Interviewees felt that having a disability could be a barrier, particularly during campaigning and due to the physical demands of the role.

"I know very few disabled candidates and yet I think the Assembly itself is quite disabled people friendly if they actually got there." (Electoral Officer)

'There's no one disabled that's obvious in the Assembly. One of the things that is a barrier with that is physical disability, the transport element in respect of being able to do the job because it depends what constituency you represent. […] Obviously if someone has a disability that doesn't allow them to be able to drive a car, then that is a huge barrier for them to even consider standing for election." (Former AM)

LGBT

There were mixed opinions on whether being LGBT was a barrier to entering the Welsh Assembly. A number of interviewees noted in the final part of the interview, (the fixed-response questionnaire), that they did not see this as a barrier to being elected. However some interviewees suggested that public and party perceptions could be a barrier to standing

> "In my experience in some of the less diverse areas of Wales, in the public and the party may not be what it should be." (AM)

> "No Members that I am aware of have come out. There are a number that I am aware of who consider themselves homosexual, and perhaps might have liked to come out, but didn't want to because of perhaps fears of changing their image, or the way they will be perceived by their constituents." (AM)

Minority Ethnic Groups

Some interviewees felt that being from a minority ethnic background could be a barrier to standing for election or to entering the Welsh Assembly. However, it was generally felt that this was not about the Assembly systems per se, but rather down to general attitudes. Interviewees thought that this should not be a barrier, but acknowledged that it was.

> "I have a friend who is from an ethnic minority background who faced quite a lot of racial abuse during the process, and so it is very difficult." (AM)

> "In some areas attitudes are not what they should be towards ethnic minorities." (Former Candidate)

Process of Nomination

The process of nomination was described as straightforward and uncomplicated and not seen as a barrier, although there were some particular challenges for those outside the main political parties and the need for support was recognised.

> "So you don't have any party support, financial support for actually running your election campaign is a major, major issue for any independent I think that's really the main one, and then obviously as an area (..)financial, support, being unable to cover such a long site as an individual as opposed to a party

member, is one of the major barriers to it I think" (Former Independent
Councillor)

Some respondents highlighted the financial burden of standing and running an
election campaign. This was considered less of a problem for those with the
necessary financial resources or party support.

"The primary barrier though was the cost of running. As a regional AM, [the]
constituency is the whole [...] region. This meant having to spend a lot of time
and money travelling around the area, canvassing and campaigning to simply
be selected." (AM)

"I would say there are barriers to people who are less wealthy as well, as
there are financial implications. There is the cost for childcare. There is the
cost of going around during selection" (AM)

Making a Living

There were a number of issues raised that are difficult to disentangle, such as
making a living and future career prospects. Many respondents discussed their
experiences in terms of the risks of standing, the risks of being elected and the risks
of losing an election.

"There is a huge workload, it is very, very insecure and the risks associated
with the steps I have taken are huge, really, really big. Even now I sometimes
I get very nervous about it. And even before I took the decision, I mean I
pondered over it for a very long time, where I think most other people would
come to the conclusion that it was a bad idea." (AM)

Risk appeared mainly to be linked to income security and this was thought to have a
considerable influence on the decision to stand for election. Some of the people we
interviewed reflected on this risk being a deterrent for others but not necessarily
themselves. The idea of jeopardising existing employment for one with uncertain
outcomes was noted as a key factor. Some participants reflected on the salary
levels.

"We have to have the calibre of people there who are good enough to be
ministers, and party leaders, and speakers on different subjects, and it's quite
obvious, MPs make around 30% more than AMs, [...] the calibre of people

aren't going to go there for that wage because it's much easier to get a similar wage in other places." (AM)

"A lot of able people who have achieved a great deal and have prosperous careers, however for them, choosing to go in to politics would mean a pay reduction. I mean, that wasn't the case for me, but I know that to be the case for a lot of people" (Former AM)

One of the most notable issues was the perceived impact on current employment in considering running for election, as well as the implications thereafter, successful or otherwise. Combining a burgeoning political role with an existing career was perceived as difficult.

"From a political party perspective, there's a dearth of people putting themselves forward as councillors, and I think the barriers are more to do with what roles can you combine it with the idea with politics is that they are paid too much is not true at that level" (Former Candidate)

"If I had a full time job it would have been impossible to stand. So if you're a full time person under employment, it's very difficult to stand." (Former Independent Councillor)

"I would recommend standing, but I would recommend they treat it as temporary employment. Because you cannot treat it as permanent employment, as there is such a thing as electorates having their vote every 3-4 years. They need to remember that it could end anytime at any election." (Party Official)

There were suggestions made by some participants that the nature of an individual's current employment was a factor in deciding about whether to run. Most participants referred to a precarious balancing of employment and running. Many spoke of needing to leave their current employment altogether, which presented a financial risk and immediate burden.

"[…]part of my agreement with work so that I could stand, I had to take a period of unpaid leave from work, so I went without pay for 7 weeks so that I could be a candidate, and that is difficult when someone is young, when someone doesn't have a lot of money behind them. It was difficult financially and I had to borrow money from the bank just to be able to stand for election." (Former Party Officer)

Some participants with direct experience of standing for election spoke about the impact of declaring their political allegiances in their work environment. Others spoke about standing for election being incompatible with their work and giving them no choice but to resign.

> "Once I got into politics and showed my political colours, that was it. There wasn't a job for me to go back to, so it was absolute. I had to give everything up.[...], I had to give up my job to be able to try and get chosen as a candidate, if I hadn't been chosen as a candidate, I would have thrown everything away and not even been able to stand [...]." (AM)

> "I had to resign to stand […] so I resigned at the best possible moment and put my nomination in the next day, so if I hadn't been elected, I wouldn't have had a job. That was obviously an issue, so there are obviously exclusions in standing for parliament and standing for the assembly, in terms of your job which does inhibit your ability to stand unless you're prepared to take that sacrifice and take that chance." (AM)

Combining paid employment with campaigning was described by many that had experienced this as challenging and detrimental to their employment. The need to balance work and other responsibilities with campaigning was described by some as exhausting.

Salary Levels

There was a general consensus among participants that the salary is reasonable and fair. Participants noted that they did not have a problem with the current pay and that it was very good wage compared to the average salary in Wales. Some commented that it is 'not far away' from someone who is doing well in business or something similar.

> "Well as an Assembly Member, I'm being paid more than I've been paid for any other job in my life." (AM)

> "I think the level of pay which at the moment is adequate, I don't particularly favour politicians pay being way above the rest of society. I am a person trying to close the gap between way at the bottom and way at the top in society actually, I think it's about right where it is now" (Candidate)

Many of the people we interviewed wanted to emphasise that the salary was not the main motivation to stand for election and wanted to convey that for them salary levels were not a major concern, although they noted the potential impact for others.

> "Pay and conditions was never a subject that excited me. […] Maybe I just thought my job was what it was, and I was hugely privileged to do what I did. So it never really concerned me." (Former AM)

> "[..] take a six thousand cut in my salary, and I think that was a situation facing a significant minority of assembly members. For many people it was a substantial pay rise, for many people it was a colossal pay rise […] but there were a few of us who were doctors, senior education managers, lawyers and we were earning significantly more" (Former AM)

Even though participants considered the salary to be good, several current AMs expressed concerns that the salary was not commensurate with the amount of work required.

> "I'm very aware that when I'm talking about the pay side especially, it's a very good wage for a lot of people, that's not what the question is. But what the person has to put in and give up for it, if they want to do the job, it's not great." (AM)

> "[…] But the truth of the matter is, per hour, for the amount of hours that I work, I earn a lot less than I used to per hour. In my old job, I was a respectable member of society, and I am not now, and that does irritate me somewhat." (AM)

Attracting Skilled and Talented Candidates

It was mentioned by several participants that the salary should be enough to attract the most senior and talented people in society, in order to recognise the risks they undertake in being an elected representative. A small number of interviewees did not agree that the current levels met this requirement and some were concerned that the difference between AM and MP salaries would be a deterrent.

> "I think if we want the most senior people and if we want the most talented people, we have to pay them in a way that reflects that we're asking them to stick their necks out and take a risk. It should be good enough to attract the right people, and has to be good enough to recognise that those people will be giving up a career, and if they lose an election, will not just be able to walk back into a career at the same level." (Former AM)

"One thing I think is a barrier, in terms of going in to politics generally, and this is true of Assembly Members and Members of Parliament, that a lot of abled people who have achieved a great deal and have prosperous careers, however for them, choosing to go in to politics would mean a pay reduction. I mean, that wasn't the case for me, but I know that to be the case for a lot of people. I know a lot of people who have thought about going into politics but the pay is inadequate; particularly alongside the perceptions of politicians." (Former AM)

"if someone is content to make the sacrifice, fine, and that is a situation that I don't think people should be in, feeling that they are willing to sacrifice in order to go to the Assembly. […] lawyers and GPs and secondary school head teachers are less likely to go into the Assembly because it's just too big a [difference] in salary. Whilst I decided to make the sacrifice, it's not fair on others to ask if they'll make that sacrifice in all honesty." (AM)

Increases in pay

Although we specifically concerned with the 1% payrise which was already in train, most participants reflected on it, suggesting that in the context of other public sector workers it was fair and acceptable. Some interviewees suggested that the freeze remain until the next election and that this was what they had expected to happen when they were elected.

"I think it's in line with the public sector pay rise isn't it […] I think that's reasonable. Assembly members don't get paid a huge amount of money anyway, compared to someone like MPs or senior civil servants within Wales, so, I think it's fair, I think it's reasonable." (Former Candidate)

"As far as I am aware, I signed up to an Assembly that was four years long, and had a pay freeze for four years. I knew that before I took it on. I expected the pay to be consistent for my whole period of office so, whilst I can understand why they would recommend a 1% pay rise, because obviously over a period of four years, the value of that salary has fallen in real terms. […] As far as I am concerned I did sign up to a deal that did not have the pay rise in it. I am content with that as that is the agreement I signed up to." (AM)

However, one current AM noted that there should be a higher increase than 1% to be consistent with other average public sector increases over this period. In particular, this AM made the point that situations were different for AMs who could not supplement their basic salary with allowances for other responsibilities.

"Those of us who have high commitments, family and mortgage etc. after four years, it hurts. Taking pay sacrifices to get by. Whereas those who say 1% is fine, tends to be those with extra responsibilities, such as through holding Ministerial office, and consequently take home a lot more than I do, and have other income as well. […] It is because I came in to the Assembly like most mature people with existing commitments." (AM)

Expenses

Concerns were raised by some respondents that the previous commissioned bodies that have looked at Assembly Member's expenses have been unrealistic in adopting a punitive approach. Several were of the opinion that the allowances were unfairly restrictive as a result of the controversies surrounding MPs expenses.

"Politicians and expenses have become a toxic combination, despite massive increases in transparency in Wales" (Former Candidate)

Current Assembly Members and Party Officials remarked on how they felt the expenses system should be sufficient to enable a wide cross-section of society to enter the Welsh Assembly by removing personal out of pocket expenses. Some however felt that the balance was adequate.

"We need to be very careful to make sure […] that I couldn't pay for a hotel on expenses that I would not be prepared to pay for myself […] Treating the public money no differently to how you would your own. There are no reasons why we need to be travelling first class; there is no reason why we would need to stay in a top hotel if we were obliged to stay away elsewhere." (AM)

While the majority of respondents remarked that the current system is very open and more transparent than Westminster, it was felt by some that more could be done to improve the public awareness of how Assembly Members' allowances are used. One suggestion by a current AM was to provide a breakdown of individual expenses, such as office allowance and staff costs, whilst also providing some form of explanatory document, rather than just publishing figures alone. Other suggestions included publishing expenses as part of an AM's monthly newsletter, so as to inform the electorate of how their money is being spent. It was remarked that doing so may also improve the public perception of AMs' expenses in Wales.

"[…] we need to be more transparent, more straightforward in the way we communicate with the electors, and part and parcel of that is expenses." (AM)

Nevertheless, several interviewees remarked that the current system often left them out of pocket and under social pressure to take the burden of additional financial costs, such as those pertaining to subsistence while travelling, attending party meetings, conferences, constituency dinners and gala events.

> "I think in the first year my office budget went over by about £2,000 which I had to pay for out of my own pocket." (AM)

> "[…] going to events that you are invited to […] there is always a raffle, there is always a ticket price, there are no allowances for these things and my pay is expected to cover that also. I am under pressure to do so." (AM)

Particular attention was brought to three areas of concern; namely travel allowances, childcare costs, and hotel costs. In relation to travel allowances, current AMs referred to how outer-region AMs or those living on the border of a region, could often be left out of pocket, with much higher and frequent travel expenses, which the current system does not fully cover, leaving individual members to cover the deficit.

> [There is a need to be] "honest in how we speak to the public about travel expenses." (AM)

> "Things focus on who's spent the most […] often it's the ones in the North that come out the most expensive, and there are others that don't claim at all because they can afford not to claim, because they have their own money. Then that's hard because then if you can afford not to claim, and choose not to, then it's not fair on the people […] that depend on getting those expenses back to be able to fulfil their role. I think then there is too much game playing in regard to expenses." (Party Official)

With regards to childcare costs, several respondents referred to the additional out of pocket expenses a single parent incurs as a result of being an Assembly Member. It was felt that this was a significant barrier that the current system did not alleviate. Suggestions as to how this situation could be remedied included the introduction of a childcare voucher allowance.

In relation to housing, there were consistent concerns from both current and previous AMs, as well as Party Officials and Electoral Officers, that the current allowances were insufficient for an Assembly Member from the outer regions trying to find suitable accommodation close to Cardiff Bay. One respondent remarked that it was unfortunate that Wales had not copied the Westminster system. Suggestions as to how the current system could be improved included Welsh Government owned properties, or a Welsh Government owned hotel close to Cardiff Bay.

Resettlement Grants

A minority of participants noted that uncertainty is simply a part of the job. Most however suggested that a resettlement grant was essential, noting the need to allow a time for transition. For example, to give time to assist their staff, settle arrangements regarding leases on offices and to make arrangements to pass forward ongoing casework.

> "If the public have spoken, and you have lost the election, there needs to be some form of compensation for helping you with the transition from public office to finding alternative employment." (Party Official)

> "I had a well-established career […] but it was very difficult to get back into that, because on one level, […] when you've then had […] years as an AM, your profile is too high, you don't fit as anyone's deputy, but on the other hand, someone who's recently come out of party political life, a voluntary organisation or indeed a business might be very wary of taking you on until you've had a period to detoxify if you see what I mean. […] I lost the election in May, it took me 3 months until about August to do all that writing to people and getting all of that sorted out, it then took me another 3 months to find a job." (Former AM)

Awareness of Resettlement Grants

There were differing levels of awareness of the resettlement arrangements, especially amongst candidates. Not surprisingly this was not seen as a major issue of concern for prospective candidates. The level of awareness at this stage of a political career was generally low.

> "The thing is when people are seeking to stand for public office, I doubt very much whether anyone is even thinking about the end of their career. Then when you are talking about resettlement grants you are talking about the end of someone's political career, or that part of their career. I do not feel it would be perceived as a barrier at the beginning." (Former AM)

There was also some lack of awareness amongst current AMs about the technicalities of the reform to the resettlement grants.

> "After losing an election? I haven't looked at it in detail, but if I understand correctly […] it's going to be lost for people who resign, yes? And only being offered to people who lost an election, is that how it's going to work? I'm thinking of my situation for example, I'm just crossing my fingers that I'm not

going to need a resettlement grant for a little while, but if I lose my seat in an election, I don't have a job to go to." (AM)

There were mixed views on reforming the current resettlement grant system. Some expressed concern that resettlement grants would not be available for those who voluntarily step down and chose not to seek re-election. They highlighted that this could lead to stagnation in the pool of AMs and, in more cynical examples, could lead to AMs standing again with the intention of losing. Others suggested that if an AM chose to stand down then the levels of resettlement should not be as high as those who lose an election. One current AM saw the need for greater flexibility to take into account personal circumstances.

"Personal circumstances need to have a role to play here, for example they may be standing down because of ill health, or may have a relative to care for […] this is a very difficult situation, and there needs to be a greater degree of flexibility in considering these circumstances as part of the resettlement allowance." (AM)

This is echoed by other participants who saw the value of a 'case-by-case' approach. For example, it was noted that someone stepping down who is close to retirement, or who could return to employment, may not require the same level of support as an AM who has a young family and a mortgage.

Risks of Removing the Resettlement Grant

There were concerns expressed that removing the Resettlement Grant completely would be a barrier and would restrict prospective candidates. There was particular concern that only people with sufficient resources, or other sources of support, could afford to take the risk.

"I think it'll put people off. It'll put off business people outside of the normal political parties standing […] it means in the last year as an Assembly member, you'll be more concentrating on what's next than concentrating on what you should be doing. So I suppose that's the key one." (Former Candidate)

Most participants considered the risks entailed in standing for election as sufficient justification for a redundancy package. Some participants saw this as a very different situation to being in private employment.

"If we want people to be able to take that risk, we've got to give them a safety net, and again this is where I have had concerns in the past about, does the

board understand the difference between being an AM and being a senior person in the private sector, I'm not sure that they do" (Former AM)

One former candidate, although considering a resettlement grant to be reasonable, could see an argument for removing it and did not believe removal would be a barrier to standing for election.

" […] don't think it would stop people willing to stand in the first place, if they're that hard up, they'll be claiming benefits. I said goodbye to a [*salary amount*] job […] did I get any redundancy […] no of course not, I quit my job, I didn't get any money […] I think if you were an AM and thought you were going to lose your seat, then you'd be saving wouldn't you. I can see an argument for getting rid of it." (Former Candidate)

Capacity and Running an Office

Several interviewees were concerned that new Assembly Members did not fully appreciate the additional 'behind the scenes' responsibilities the role carries.

"When you stand for election you do not realise you are going to be taking on responsibility for another property, become an employer to a number of staff, and then you have a base over in Cardiff, which again you're responsible for. There needs to be more awareness out there." (AM)

Across the responses there was an emerging theme that the systems need to evolve to reflect the public's expectations of relying on a modern service. Several respondents referred to the growing workload in terms of running an effective constituency office, dealing with casework, research, the need to draft press releases, and the growing demand to communicate more frequently and innovatively with constituents via electronic and social media channels. It was felt that the allowances in terms of staffing had not evolved to mirror the new modern expectations of officials in public office. Nevertheless both Party Officials and Electoral Officers spoke favourably of Assembly Members' abilities to manage their staff efficiently, and develop good working relationships with their employees. Some participants raised issues concerning a perceived inadequacy of staff allowances and disproportionate office allowances that do not recognise the differences in rent prices in South Wales compared to the North, Mid and West of the country.

In our exploration of issues several respondents drew comparisons with Westminster in discussing Assembly Member's office allowances. Objections were raised about

the more limited office capacities and fewer resources compared with MPs offices. This was particularly acute for individuals based in Cardiff and was heightened by the perception that Assembly Members have a comparatively higher presence in their local community.

Some interviewees referred to a lack of appreciation at the time of standing for election that they would thereafter be expected to manage their public office commitments alongside expectations of organising their physical office.

> "The first couple of months of having an office were worrying times for me trying to run a constituency, at the same time as trying to organise decorators and so on." (AM)

Some felt these barriers could be overcome by offering training in time management. Furthermore one notable comment was made about additional sessions for those candidates who lost an election but want to stand again in the next election, so as to "learn lessons as to what you can do better next time." (Party Official)

Concerns were also raised as to how reliant new Assembly Members are on their previous experience within their party group noting the challenges faced by independent candidates with no party to support them.

Solutions offered by the interviewees included more formal briefing sessions, whereby current AMs could meet with potential candidates from all parties who are standing for election, to make them feel more familiar with the establishment. It was also suggested that these briefing sessions could include guidance on the stresses and challenges presented by election campaigns.

Geographical Location

Many barriers were identified over the course of the research that centred on the geographical location of a candidate's constituency or region, or on the geographical composition of Wales itself. It was clear from interview findings that distance from Cardiff has a direct impact on family life and could be a significant barrier to individuals standing for election. Some interviewees also felt that voters in North Wales felt disengaged and disconnected from the Assembly and that this in turn might impact on the number of candidates standing for election in those areas.

Impact on Family Life

Almost all interviewees identified the impact on family life as a significant barrier, particularly where young children were involved. Many identified the distance and travel as a strain on the family and their marriage or partnership.

> "The impact on my family now is huge […] I think that this is a very serious problem. It is a pressure for people if they have huge amounts of travel, or if they are a long way from their families." (AM)

> "You can have a timetable that's a bit more supportive, but with the best will in the world, if you have a job which requires you to be in Cardiff […] its inevitably going to be difficult for people with child or other caring responsibilities, it's not particularly great on marriages, marriages do fail where relationships are under that long distance stress." (Former AM)

Interviewees identified other issues in relation to how being an Assembly Member impacts on family life, particularly if they have childcare or caring responsibilities, or if they are a single parent. One interviewee commented that the Assembly is missing a huge amount of potential candidates, suggesting that the lack of support for single parents is a significant barrier.

Many felt that the Assembly did not give due consideration to family or caring responsibilities, and did not appreciate the difficulties of keeping up with these responsibilities in line with trying to campaign or fulfil their role as an AM.

> "I know people […] who've been having to look after spouses who've been very ill and dying, and then there are issues of paying for the additional care you have to provide for that person to enable you to carry on doing your job, and […] there is support to enable you to do that from the public authorities, but that support won't cover you to go to charitable events in evenings or to attend evening meetings." (Former AM)

> "[…] I do not understand how someone who is a single parent from North Wales would ever be able to be an AM. Because what would they do? Would they send their children to boarding school? Would they hire a nanny? Would they take their children around and have someone teach them on the go?" (AM)

There was also some debate about the meaning of 'family friendly' and what might be family friendly to one person may not be so to another.

> "Some of my colleagues used to say 'family friendly.' It depends on what you mean by 'family friendly', because if you are representing a North Wales constituency, or indeed a Mid-Wales or West-Wales constituency, you can't commute to the National Assembly on a daily basis." (Former AM)

> 'I would certainly not have stood for the Assembly if the Assembly's working practices as they are now. Where they're regularly sitting until 8pm, 9pm at night. I could not as a single parent have considered that under any circumstances.' (Former AM)

Travel

Many interviewees felt that travel could be a barrier to many people, particularly to potential candidates from the North or Mid and West Wales. Many interviewees also felt that not much could be done about this issue.

> "Regional members, especially the North and Mid regions, have much higher travel expenses than the constituency members. Why is there no recognition of this in the mileage cost allowances?" (Former AM)

> "In fact from North Wales, it seems to be quicker, easier to get to London." (Councillor)

> "The train service is awful. Not in terms of frequency, the frequency's very good but the rolling stock is awful, the on-train facilities are awful and […] you've got the poor rail services, both in terms of capacity, comfort and on-train facilities." (Councillor)

Housing Allowance

There were mixed responses in regards to the amount of housing allowance that Assembly Members could claim. Some interviewees felt that it was fine, but a greater number felt that it was simply insufficient to be able to rent a property in Cardiff.

> "In relation to the housing allowance in Cardiff, I think that's completely reasonable too, obviously it doesn't meet with all the costs but it seems that it shouldn't in reality. It's fair enough; I have no complaint with it." (AM)

> "I really struggled with the amount that they do give you; you cannot buy or rent much with the amount that they do allow. That should, and does need to be increased." (AM)

The housing allowance and the constraints on housing were seen to be a significant problem for people with a young family. The allowance was seen as barely enough for a one-bedroom flat, which was unrealistic if you were going to be travelling with a young children. Using hotel accommodation was also seen as unsuitable due to lack of facilities and the need to check out every fews days.

> "If I had been elected […] my son would have been 6 weeks old when I was an AM, and the fact that I wouldn't have had room to bring him and someone like my mother or husband to stay with me when I was in Cardiff, well that would have stopped me being able to do my job as an AM." (Former Candidate)

> "The situation we've got now assumes that the AM is a man with a wife and children at home in the constituency, and so it's perfectly acceptable for him to be renting a little flat in Cardiff because that's not their home." (Former AM)

> "I've given up trying to fight. It's so depressing from an unelected body, to get no help. I feel like I'm a real asset and yet I'm likely to not stand again." (AM)

Some interviewees felt that they should be able to decide whether their main home was in Cardiff or the constituency.

> "I think some consideration needs to be given to the fact that some AMs may wish to have their children with them, or indeed elderly relatives, but particularly children, and that therefore you should be allowed to decide at the beginning of your term whether your main home is in Cardiff or your constituency." (Former AM)

Some interviewees suggested that there should be some kind of central accommodation for AMs:

> "So you could say, well we'll buy […] a reasonable hotel, give them a sitting room and a bedroom and they can all have their meals at the Cynulliad, they don't need to go out. That might be a way of doing it, and that actually would be more transparent." (Councillor)

However, others saw this as a potential barrier:

> "I've heard of you know, the Assembly buying a block of flats and all AMs in Cardiff being expected to stay there, I mean that's just outrageous nonsense and in terms of barriers to stand I most certainly wouldn't have been able to do that, and I don't think anybody with a family would have been able to do that." (Former AM)

One interviewee also suggested that there should be some support for AMs in making a flat habitable.

> "I was scratching my head thinking, well why should I pay hundreds and hundreds of pounds to kit out a flat, and the only reason I need a flat is because I live down in Cardiff. It doesn't make sense." (AM)
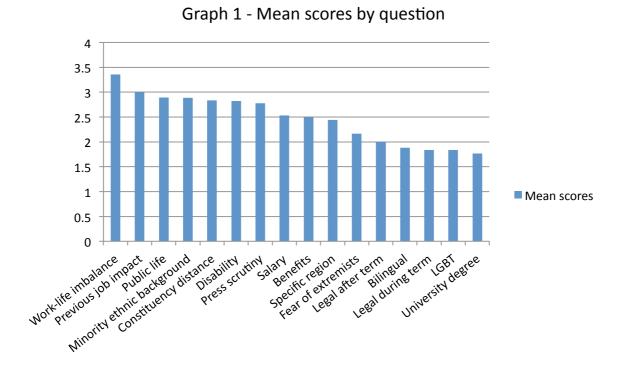
There was also seen to be an issue with expenses for food if you did rent accommodation.

> "Members who have a flat don't get any allowance by now for food in the evening. I know as an AM I don't have time to shop down in Cardiff, I can't carry my food down if I'm going on a plane or train or whatever, I certainly don't have time to cook and clean and things like that." (AM)

Part Two: Fixed Choice Questionnaire

The aim of this section of the project was to attempt to quantify and rank the barriers as perceived by the respondents. It should be noted that as the majority of respondents are or were Assembly Members, some of the responses will be based on their experiences of barriers as well as their perceptions of barriers that may exist for other people.

The first section was a series of 16 fixed-end questions, asking respondents to quantify (on a scale of 1 to 4, 1 being 'strongly disagree') a series of barriers the researchers believed could exist, in light of the literature review and their own understanding and experience. A full list of the questions can be seen in Appendix one. The responses were analysed, and ranked by their average score.

Graph 1 - Mean scores by question

Graph 1 shows the average scores for each question. This shows that the respondents perceived the work-life imbalance (3.35) to be the biggest barrier to being an AM, followed by impact it would have on their previous career (3) and living a public life (2.89). The lowest scores were legal barriers during term (1.83), being LGBT[76] (1.83) and not having a university degree (1.76).

It should be noted that statistical tests (namely ANOVA and post-hoc Tukey) showed that some questions demonstrated statistically significant differences, and we are thus confident in stating that the most important barriers are (in descending order of importance) questions 3 (work-life imbalance), 5 (unable to continue previous profession), 9 (living a public life), 13 (minority ethnic background), 16 (constituency far from Cardiff), 14 (having a disability), 8 (press scrutiny) and 1 (salary). There we can say that everything from salary to work-life imbalance on graph 1 is viewed as a barrier by the respondents. This means that the data has been shown to be statistically sound. However, we are still able to utilise the ranking of the means from the other questions to draw some insights. We recommend strongly that further work on this is done so as to allow for a wider pool of respondents to be included to allow for even stronger data.

The questions were then arranged into high-level groupings where questions shared some common features. These groupings were **social** (Q's 3, 4, 8 and 9), **financial**

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[76] LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual

(Q's 1, 2 and 5), **geographical** (Q's 12 and 16), **equality** (Q's 10, 11, 13, 14 and 15) and **legal** (Q's 6 and 7). These were then arranged into a hierarchy, with those scoring highest on the scale closest to the start, and then following in decreasing importance. This resulted in the hierarchical model in figure 1 (figures in brackets are mean scores).
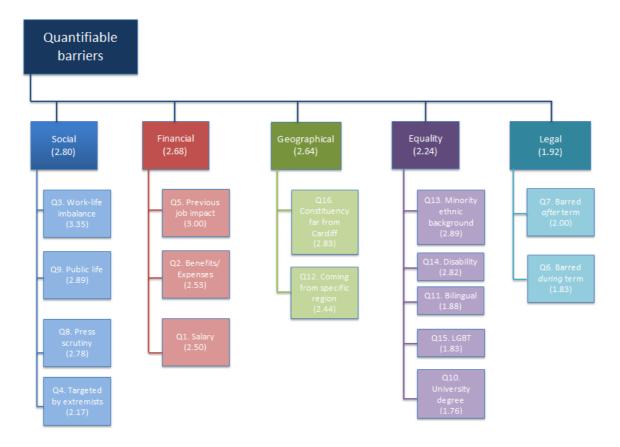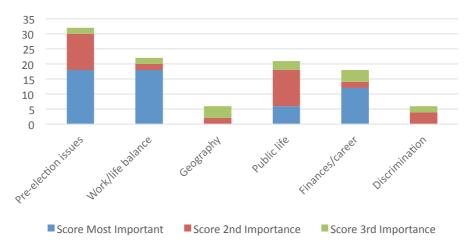

Figure 1 – Quantifiable barriers hierarchy

This model allows us to more simply understand and graphically illustrate the barriers that the respondents experienced and perceived. The biggest barrier was therefore the social grouping, followed by financial. Within these groups the highest ranking barriers are closest to the top.

The responses for the open ended questions showed a slightly different picture however. The respondents were asked for to rank in order of importance the three biggest barriers in their own words. These were then arranged into high-level groupings and the responses were weighted. Table 1 shows the groupings and graph 2 shows the results.

Pre-election issues	Problems involved with running in the first place, including financial costs, being part of a party system, selection issues, self-confidence
Work/life balance	Problems caused by high work load, lack of time outside of work, problems for family and stress of job
Geography	Problems caused by distance from constituency to Cardiff, size of constituency and perceived disconnection of Cardiff from rest of Wales
Public life	Problems caused by press scrutiny and being a public figure as well as scrutiny of family, perception of politicians
Finances/career	Problems caused by potential damage to career, wage changes, costs of being an AM
Discrimination	Problems caused by being a member of a minority or women, both when seeking candidacy and as candidate and AM

Table 1 – High-level groupings

Graph 2 - Scored Importance

Whilst the data largely mirrors the data found in the fixed-end questions, there was one notable finding. That is, that the largest grouping here, pre-election issues (which includes barriers such as financial and social capacity to run, party involvement etc.) was not considered in the fixed-end questions. As well as this, whilst financial issues (including pay, expenses and career risk) were fairly common responses, it was generally a focus on potential damage to career prospects as opposed to salary or expenses.

Salary was mentioned by only three respondents as opposed to the six times career damage was mentioned. Expenses was referred to only in relation to the difficulties that arose when claiming them, or the perceived inequalities between AM's of different types and from different locations.

The responses were again arranged into a hierarchical model as above, which can be seen in figure 2 below.
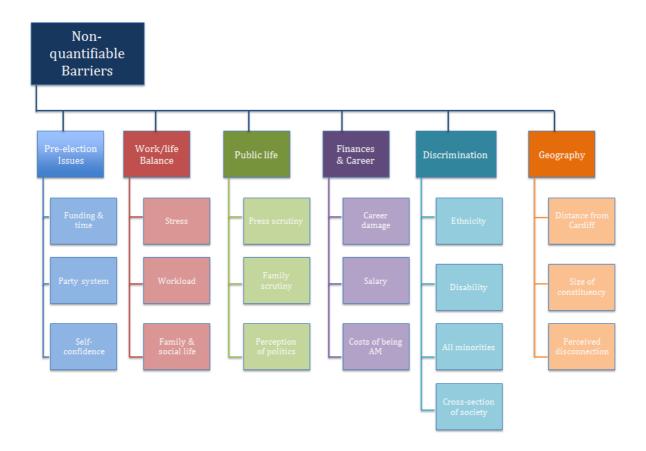
Figure 2 – Non-quantifiable barriers hierarchy

One important similarity to note is that respondents at both points strongly noted the work-life imbalance as a potential barrier, with respondents discussing both the stress of the role itself as well as the impact it has on their family and social lives. A further similarity at the other end of the scale is that respondents were generally in disagreement with the idea that the legal barriers during and after their terms were barrier. It wasn't mentioned at all during the open-ended questions discussed here and only three people agreed with the idea that it could be barrier after their term, with no respondents agreeing that it was a barrier during their term. Respondents

were, as noted, generally far more concerned with their careers prior to being an AM than during or afterwards.

There are two main conclusions that we can draw from this data. Firstly, as noted, owing to the small size we cannot say for certain that all the data is statistically significant. We do not believe that this negates our finding in any way, but do strongly recommend further work is done to establish absolute certainty with the data.

Secondly, it is clear that respondents primarily viewed two issues as being the biggest barriers; firstly, the issue of the work-life balance and secondly the pre-election issues. It can be argued that these two responses reflect different periods in the respondents' lives. In the case of the former the respondents' experiences as an AM and in the latter their experiences as a candidate.

With regards to the data relating to issues of equality and discrimination, it is somewhat encouraging to see that only 4 respondents viewed the issue within the top three biggest barriers. However, when we look at the fixed-end questions, the data suggests that whilst discrimination is less of an issue for LGBT, non-Welsh speaking and those without degrees, it was highly rated as a potential barrier in the case of those from minority ethnic barriers and those with disabilities. Gender was raised by one respondent in relation to attempting to have the Assembly reflect a cross-section of Welsh society.

Discussion and Potential Actions

The work presented here provides insight into the many and varied reasons why individuals decide to stand for election, the challenges they might face during a campaign and the effects of success or failure following the outcomes of an election. A number of barriers to standing for election were put forward by interviewees, either from their direct experience or the effects they perceived in others. Whilst no claims are made about the extent to which the issues identified will make the difference between standing or not standing in any particular individual it is clear that these were considered important to many of the people interviewed.

Salary

Most interviewees felt that the salary is generally reasonable in comparison to the average salary in Wales. Many interviewees emphasised that salary was not one of their motivations in standing for election. Although there was recognition that the salary is comparable to the private sector, many interviewees also expressed that the salary was not commensurate to the risk involved in terms of job instability, and did not respect the sacrifices that must be made to fulfil their duties as Assembly Members. In this respect, a number of interviewees felt that the salary could be a barrier to attracting the most senior and talented people in society to stand for election. There were worries that if the salary was not commensurate to the job, then this would affect the variety of candidates standing for election. This could then leave only those who can supplement their income through other means and are supported by vested interests.

Potential Actions

Salary level and percentage rise is something that needs to be kept under review to ensure that the salary remains competitive and attractive in light of the potential barriers highlighted in this report.

Expenses

Several interviewees mentioned the MPs expenses controversy in late 2009 as being a catalyst in restricting allowances, and affecting public confidence in politicians generally. Interviewees were much more critical of the expenses than the salary, many commenting that it is costing them money to be an Assembly Member and that they often have to use personal resources to meet the shortfall in expenses.

A number of interviewees expressed the sense that the expenses system should be sufficient to enable a greater cross-section of society to enter the Assembly. Several participants noted the financial and social pressure of having to attend various events and party meetings, all of which came out of their own pocket. Although it was recognized that expenses could not cover all of these things, it was still seen as a concern.

The majority of interviewees stated that the system is transparent enough, as the expenses are all published online. However, many felt that more could be done to improve public awareness of how Assembly Members utilise their allowances. A number of interviewees noted that some constituencies and regions are enormous, or very rural, and so naturally their travel costs will be higher. Assembly Members in North Wales will have greater travel costs than those in Cardiff, and so a greater effort needs to be made to explain to the public *why* these are higher.

A significant worry for interviewees in relation to expenses were childcare costs, and it was felt that this could be a substantial barrier for many people in entering the Assembly, particularly for single parents. Similar concerns were made in relation to caring for elderly, disabled or ill relatives.

Potential Actions

Publishing more detail, for example, the number of miles an Assembly Member has covered instead of simply quoting the expenses claimed for travel, would better illustrate to the public where that money has gone.

Differentiating more clearly between money that is paid to the Assembly Member as salary and money that the Assembly Member uses on such things as office expenses and staff salaries.

Publish a monthly newsletter (as suggested by an Assembly Member) to include a breakdown of expenses to inform the electorate how the money is being spent.

Consider the introduction of a childcare voucher allowance, and increased support at evenings and weekends to enable parents of young children to attend necessary events and meetings.

Resettlement Grants

Most interviewees saw resettlement grants as essential due to the precarious nature of the role, and viewed the risks of standing for election as sufficient justification for such a package. The grant allows for a short period of transition from political life, and affords the Member time to settle office affairs, assist their staff in finding employment, and in many cases finding new employment themselves. Many

interviewees made the comparison with a job in the public sector, and that anyone losing their job within that sector would be afforded a redundancy payment.

There were very mixed views in relation to how the grants should operate in practice. Some believed they should not be available for those retiring or stepping down, whilst others felt that creating this divide might encourage Members to stand for re-election with the intention of losing, in order to get this payment. Some interviewees suggested that those who stand down should get a lesser payment than those who lose, however this could contribute to the cynical notion of losing an election on purpose. Finally, other interviewees suggested the value of a case-by-case approach.

The majority of interviewees were in agreement that removing the grant completely would be a significant barrier for many individuals wishing to stand, as it would remove that counterbalance to the risk involved.

Potential Actions

Explore approaches for best practice in relation to resettlement grants.

Increase the awareness of resettlement grants amongst Assembly Members, candidates, and potential candidates.

Geographical Location

It was clear from the research that most interviewees felt that geographical location was a barrier to many standing for election. Most interviewees concurred that moving the location of the Assembly, drastic a recommendation as that would be, would not remove the barrier, but rather it would make it difficult for another group of people. As one former candidate noted, 'I think it makes sense that the Assembly is in Cardiff as the capital city of Wales.'

The impact on family life consistently seemed to be the greatest concern in relation to geographical location and distance from Cardiff of those interviewed. Interviewees suggested that the Assembly should do more to support those with childcare and caring responsibilities, and by doing so would remove some of the barriers relating to distance, as Members could have their families with them. Worryingly, one current AM commented, 'I've given up trying to fight. It's so depressing from an unelected

body, to get no help. I feel like I'm a real asset and yet I'm likely to not stand again.' Not only is the issue surrounding support with family life seemingly a barrier to people standing for election, but also is causing elected Members not to want to return to the Assembly. One current AM with a family also commented, 'it feels like they don't want people like me.'

There was also some debate surrounding the term 'family friendly' and the fact that what is family friendly for one Member may not be for another. For example, a Member in Cardiff may want to work a 9am – 5pm day and be home with their family in the evening. A Member from the North may prefer to work until 10pm at night in order to lessen the number of days spent in Cardiff to go home and see their family. This is something that the Assembly might wish to consider.

Travel appeared to be another issue, and many interviewees demonstrated their discontent with the transport options in Wales. It was felt that roads need considerably more work; particularly in the North, and rail links should be better and offer better on-board services such as Wi-Fi to enable Members to work on the go. A large number of interviewees expressed that it was easier to get to London than Cardiff. On the other hand, Members praised the airport and flights available from Anglesey to Cardiff and found this had improved transport options from North to South

Potential Actions

Consider the support offered to individuals with caring responsibilities.

Take into account the increased mileage that is incurred by Members from some regions in Wales.

Housing Allowance

For many interviewees, the impact on family life clearly tied in with the housing allowance available to them, and some felt that this in itself was a barrier. Interviewees commented that the system seemed to have been set up to allow a male Assembly Member to rent a little flat in Cardiff, and that this was no longer an adequate reflection of a modern Member. Some Members saw commuting to the

constituency as being easier than commuting to Cardiff. Although this would not be suitable for everyone, it was felt that the option should be given.

Other issues in relation to the housing allowance included support in making rented property habitable, as there is currently no allowance for furnishing a property. Similarly, there is no longer an allowance for food for overnight stays in rented accommodation. A small number of members suggested that this should be looked at again. These could be barriers as they cause an Assembly Member to go into their own pocket as a result of having to be in Cardiff.

Potential Actions

Consider adjustments to housing allowances to enable those Members with young families to have their family with them, should they choose to.

Enable choice about where the AM's main home is.

Public Disengagement

Some interviewees commented that political disengagement within the public might be a barrier for individuals in some areas, as they might think it pointless or not a worthwhile job. It was felt that some areas of Wales were far removed from Cardiff, both geographically and democratically. Minister visits were seen to be 'Royal Visits' in North Wales, rather than being seen to come here to discuss local issues. Again, although there were no radical suggestions for the Assembly itself to be physically moved, a number of interviewees did note that there should be a greater devolution to the regions of Wales to improve confidence and engagement with the electorate, so that the public may see local issues being discussed locally.

It was generally felt that not enough use was being made of regional Welsh Government buildings to hold such meetings, for example, Llandudno Junction, Aberystwyth and Carmarthen. This would give the public in regions far from Cardiff a greater connect with the Assembly.

Potential Actions

Investigate ways in which the Assembly can be seen to engage more with the public generally.

Political Culture

The primary issue that most interviewees of both genders identified in relation to political culture was how being female was a barrier to entering the Assembly. Women are still seen to be the main carer for children, even in a two-person household, and many interviewees felt there was a perception that they should be at home with their children instead of entering politics. This was a viewpoint often shared by the public, and members of – often their own – political parties.

Interviewees suggested that the candidate selection process within political parties was often a problem, and it was thought that some parties had a culture that discriminated if you are a woman. It was generally recognised that political parties should be doing more to dissipate this barrier.

Interviewees generally believed there were barriers for people with disabilities in entering the Assembly. Many commented that the Assembly was very disability-friendly, however one current Assembly Member noted that, 'as a disabled AM we are not consulted when devising assisted interventions.' This seems to be counter-productive. A number of interviewees felt that the physical demands of the role – travel, campaigning and day-to-day work – could be very off-putting for candidates with disabilities and may deter them from standing. There was a general consensus that more needed to be done to remove or reduce barriers for those with disabilities who wish to stand.

Some interviewees noted the potential challenges faced by LGBT candidates either from within their political party or from members of the public who did not embrace diversity. Similarly several interviewees suggested that candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds could face prejudice and noted examples where prospective candidates had experienced racial abuse. Lack of acceptance of diversity in political life either from some sections of political parties or the some sections of the general public was thought to be a considerable barrier to standing for election.

Potential Actions

Consult disabled Members about their individual needs.

Pre-election Issues

Many participants referred to their personal experiences and the barriers they faced in taking the decision to stand. Difficulties were perceived pertaining to financial and professional risks. Examples of such concerns included the personal cost of running an election campaign, as well as concerns in publically declaring their political aspirations to their employers. Other referred to their salaries in elected office being significantly less than their previous profession, as well as a potential inability to go back to return to your previous employment. Some respondents also referred to how they were thousands of pounds in debt as a result of taking the decision to stand.

These significant financial and professional scarifies suggest that a significant degree of financial, social and cultural capital is required to even consider standing for election.

Potential Actions

Undertake further more detailed research with a greater number and broader range of stakeholders.

Explore how the barriers identified can be best addressed.

Appendix 1: Fixed Choice Questionnaire

*Q1: To what extent do you agree that the offered **salary** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

*Q2: To what extent do you agree that the set of provided **benefits** (e.g. allowable expenses, housing allowance) could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

*Q3: To what extent do you agree that **work-life imbalance** (e.g. job stress, long working hours) could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

*Q4: To what extent do you agree that **fear of being targeted by extremists/terrorists** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

*Q5: To what extent do you agree that **being unable to (fully) continue your previous profession** during your term could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

*Q6: To what extent do you agree that the **legal framework** prescribing what is allowed **during term** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

*Q7: To what extent do you agree that the **legal framework** prescribing what is professionally not allowed **after term** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

*Q8: To what extent do you agree that **being scrutinised by the press** on a daily basis could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

*Q9: To what extent do you agree that **living a public life** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

Q10: *To what extent do you agree that **not having a university degree** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

Q11: *To what extent do you agree that **not being bilingual Welsh/English** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

Q12: *To what extent do you agree that **coming from specific regions of Wales** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

Q13: *To what extent do you agree that **coming from a minority ethnic background** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

Q14: *To what extent do you agree that **having a disability** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

Q15: *To what extent do you agree that **being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

Q16: *To what extent do you agree that **coming from constituency far away from Cardiff** could be a barrier to entering the National Assembly for Wales*

Strongly Disagree [ ]   Disagree [ ]   Agree [ ]   Strongly Agree [ ]

Finally, please list and RANK to your view the THREE most important barriers to entering the National Assembly for Wales (in order of importance)

1._____

2. _____

3. _____