

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: [Women in the House of Commons after the 2020 Election](#), HC 630

Wednesday 14 September 2016

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Members present: Mrs Maria Miller (Chair); Ruth Cadbury; Maria Caulfield; Angela Crawley; Mrs Flick Drummond; Jess Phillips; Mr Gavin Shuker.

Questions 1 – 22

Witnesses

I: Professor Rosie Campbell, Professor of Politics, Birkbeck, University of London, Professor Sarah Childs, Professor of Politics and Gender, University of Bristol, and Lord Hayward OBE.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Rosie Campbell, Professor Sarah Childs and Lord Hayward.

Q1 **Chair:** Good morning. Can I firstly apologise that we are running a little late? Thank you on behalf of the Committee for giving us your time here today. We have a very hard stop on our conversation at 11.45, so if you could bear with us and keep answers short I would be very grateful. Thank you again for coming in. Perhaps we could just start by each of you giving your name and the organisation you represent.

Professor Childs: I am Professor Sarah Childs from the University of Bristol.

Professor Campbell: Professor Rosie Campbell from Birkbeck.

Lord Hayward: Lord Hayward. I am here under two guises: first, as an independent analyst; and then talking on behalf of the Conservative party—not on behalf of the Conservative party, but making one or two observations about selection processes from a Tory party point of view.

Chair: That is very helpful. Thank you very much for your time.

Q2 **Maria Caulfield:** Given that we have seen the initial boundary changes come through this week, I just wanted each of you to briefly say how you think the reduction in seats to 600 will affect the representation of women in Parliament. What are your initial thoughts?

Professor Childs: It depends on what the parties do in response to those changes. We do not know whether those changes disproportionately impact sitting women. We also need to think about the extent to which the parties might make decisions to ensure that the percentages of women increase or stay the same. We also do not know whether selections might favour sitting men MPs over women. It is an empirical question to observe and to take note of.

Professor Campbell: Someone could do a basic analysis, using yesterday's data, plugging the boroughs in and trying to model what could happen if we used 2015 election results, but it would take someone at least a week to process that. On the basis of what we knew before yesterday, we know that there are more Labour women MPs, and we also know that, for the Conservative party, the Labour party and the SNP, women are slightly more likely to be representative of urban areas. Therefore, we know there is a chance that women will be more affected than men, but we do not know for sure yet.

Lord Hayward: Could I make one or two observations? Before I start, although I accept the question in relation to women, there are protected characteristics of equalities across a whole range. I come from a mixed race family, I have multiple sclerosis and I am gay, so I cover a range of them that are not covered by the question.



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Jess Phillips: Would you like a seat in the Commons?

Lord Hayward: I will try to give the stats where I can, but unfortunately, because of other events, I do not have the details as much as possible.

Given the publication of the boundaries, as has just been said, it is difficult to say. The selections for the different political parties will not take place until 2017 or 2018, so we can try to guess how that will affect the different representations of women or other minorities, but I am not absolutely sure. I share the view that it may have an impact, particularly because of certain urban concentrations, and the fact that, as Professor Campbell said, Labour has more women proportionately. It may affect them, but one of Labour's biggest losses is in South Wales, where they have, I think, proportionately fewer women. It is speculation at this stage.

Q3 **Maria Caulfield:** I agree with your point. This inquiry is looking at women in the Commons, so that is why we are particularly focusing on that, but I take your point that we need to look at all the protected characteristics. I presume, if I may, from your answers, that you agree that the Government's equality impact assessment of this reduction could not really conclude definitively that reducing the numbers to 600 would have an effect on women. You are saying that initially you agree with that; it is too early to say.

Professor Campbell: Yes.

Q4 **Maria Caulfield:** Assuming that it has a negative impact on the number of women in the House of Commons, what actions would be taken, and by whom, to ensure that the number of women stays as representative as possible in the Commons?

Professor Childs: In my recent report, *The Good Parliament*, which looks at diversity-sensitive Parliaments, I have a recommendation that the political parties sign up to a commitment to ensure that, at the absolute minimum, the percentage of women in their parliamentary parties does not decline as a consequence of boundary reforms. I recommend that they take whatever action they need to take to ensure that does not happen, and to consider the boundary reviews as possibly even an opportunity to increase the numbers of women. It is about putting in front of parties a responsibility to take equality of representation across different identities very seriously, and to take the measures that are necessary.

Professor Campbell: If you look at the internal party mechanisms for the selection of candidates, only the Labour party has a formal mechanism for ensuring the more proportional representation of women. If we look at what has happened over the last few years in the SNP and the Conservative party, both parties have made significant increases in terms of the proportion of women, but it is very much informal practice.



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It is very much dependent on the activities and commitment of particular individuals within the party. There could be changes of personnel, and there could be a retrenchment. This might be a point where that could happen. More formalisation of the good practice that has been developed inside some of the other parties outside of Labour would be really helpful.

Lord Hayward: I have one or two observations, one in relation to the selection. The drawing of the boundaries itself will not make any difference. It is the selection and attitudes of the political parties that will make the difference. I am only aware of one area of the world where there is an attempt to protect minorities in any form in drawing up the equivalent of constituencies, and that is American districts, but that is on ethnic basis. That is, to be honest, to suit the politicians of the Democrats and the Republicans. In other words, they draw the boundaries to maximise their majorities and reduce the number of marginal constituencies. Looking at Western democracies, I can only see that as one example where there is an attempt to protect any form of minority outside this country.

With the selection procedures it is a question of the changing of attitudes. Interestingly enough, the Tory party lost 10 seats at the last election, three of whom were female. It is an irony that, had the boundary changes been introduced in 2013, two of those three women, i.e. the MPs for Brentwood and Isleworth and Wirral, would actually not have lost and would have been representing constituencies that will now exist. It is an attitudinal matter that we may come back to in a few minutes.

Q5 Maria Caulfield: I think you are all saying a similar thing: it is not necessarily the boundary review that will impact the number of women in Parliament; it is what the political parties do with that. I have a really brief question: do you think all the political parties have taken that on board, and are taking their role seriously in avoiding the number of women being reduced?

Professor Childs: We have not seen all of the political parties making a public statement that they are doing that. That is something I would like the Committee to push for them to do: to publicly declare that, as part of the process that comes with the boundary review, they will make sure that the percentage of women does not decline at the next election.

Professor Campbell: Inside all the parties, including the Labour party, this issue is a matter of conflict and contestation, so there are actors who are taking the issue very seriously, but there are competing factions. One of the potential problems with the boundary review is that that pressure may increase. Anything that raises the profile of this issue, so that it continues to have the resonance that it has had in the last 10 or so years, would be really useful.

Lord Hayward: One element will cause difficulty here, over and above what has just been referred to. There is an automatic presupposition—the Tories have described it as “no one left behind”, but there is also a



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supposition within the Labour party—that you will be selecting from existing, sitting MPs. Therefore, to some extent there may well be a hiatus in terms of the advancement not only of women but of BME candidates and the like, because the parties will be choosing from within an existing bloc.

I would make the observation, however, that that is standard industrial practice where you have redundancies; I speak here as somebody who used to negotiate for the management side with trade unions. You freeze recruitment at that point. There is almost certain to be a hiatus in terms of the growth in percentages of all minority groups running into the next Parliament.

Q6 **Jess Phillips:** Going back to the political parties, both the candidates for the Labour party leader have agreed that they will see no reduction in the number of women as a proportion, which is 44% in the Labour party. I wonder if any one of you has any idea how the hell they are going to do that—is there a system that could ever be devised where that would be the case?

Lord Hayward: Looking at the Labour party, you have a policy of all-women shortlists, which might make it somewhat easier than, for example, the Conservative party, which does not have that sort of specific commitment. Therefore, with all-women shortlists, you say as the seats come up: “These must be in one form or another.” You might be able to meet that target. I notice the shaking of heads even among the Labour members.

It will, of course, depend where those seats go from. If you have a candidate who is displaced, let us say, in Luton because of redrawing of the boundaries, it will be very difficult to move them directly to a seat in London or the West Midlands, when there are other displaced MPs in that area.

Q7 **Jess Phillips:** I suppose what I would like to ask you, as a panel of people, is this: let us say there was a man and a woman up against each other in a direct run-off for a seat and they each had 50%. It is never that simple, but if that were the case do you think that in each of the political parties there is still a culture where the likelihood is that the man would win?

Professor Campbell: The research would show that, without direct intervention, that would be the case. To answer your first question about whether you can retain 44%, some of that depends on the implementation of all-women shortlists—which seats are designated and how that is organised. Historically, obviously, that has been half of retirement seats, but how do you decide which retirement seats? Even the best psephologists cannot predict what will happen in the next election, but putting that aside, if you were to say, “Those women will go in the seats with the largest majorities,” then you would be



future-proofing the policy. Whether you could get that past the leadership I do not know.

Jess Phillips: I will try.

Angela Crawley: I would make a comparison. First of all, I will say that your comments, Lord Hayward, were very effective in highlighting that diversity is not just about whether you are a woman or not; it is about all of the diversity markers and protected characteristics. One of the ones you did not mention, and I am sure you would have, was socioeconomic background. I wanted to ensure that each member of the panel has their thoughts heard on that.

The only other thing that I wanted to say is that obviously you mentioned earlier that there would be no elections, so we would not see the impact of zipping or shortlists. The SNP have introduced new mechanisms; perhaps not as formalised as the more established parties, but ultimately the SNP introduced selection lists where retired candidates would be replaced by a zipped list of female candidates. That has clearly worked in the 2016 elections. You only have to see the new intake of female MSPs to see that that was really effective. Secondly, we will have our local government elections in 2017 in Scotland. I could not possibly predict the outcome, because we are going through vetting and selection processes at the moment, but the key point for me is that, in the Scottish National party, the members decide who their candidate is.

As much as you can have mechanisms and you can have the correct kinds of reinforcement, it is not always possible if your members ultimately decide, and they decide the best candidate on a number of factors. I wanted to bring it back to my original question, on what your thoughts were on socioeconomic background and how you felt that diversity across all the protected characteristics could enhance Parliament.

Professor Campbell: This is an absolutely enormous issue. One of the reasons that we tend to focus on ethnicity and gender is because there is an enormous amount of inequality, but also it is much easier to measure. Having just conducted a candidate study of the 2015 election, one thing that shocked me was the amount of money people disclosed that they had spent on selection expenses. Obviously there are some people who get support, say from trade unions, but the upper end of the range that people said they had spent on selection expenses was £80,000. That can include things like renting places or childcare, potentially—a wide range of factors. That goes alongside risk: if you are standing in a marginal constituency you may get it and then step outside of a career or the job market for five years. We do not think about this enough. There are some structural factors that we need to address if we want to deal with the unrepresentativeness in terms of socioeconomic background.

Professor Childs: I would say again that, in *The Good Parliament* report, there is a recommendation about parties signing up to a selection expenses cap so that they keep control of this, which should enable other



people. The other point I would make about class is that often—I am not suggesting this is what you are doing—there is an assumption that women are all middle-class and all the working class are men. It is very important to recognise that when we talk about bringing more women into Parliament, we are also talking about the diversity of women in Parliament. That is sometimes missed when the media get involved, perhaps.

Lord Hayward: When I came into Parliament in 1983, there were still people who were miners in Parliament. There were people who were skilled craftsmen of all sorts. What we have watched over the last 30-odd years, and before that, is a steady disappearance of the manual-work representatives, particularly within the Labour party. I think it is fair to say that the Tory party generally did not have that representation; the Labour party did.

I am concentrating on the Labour party, because I must admit I have not looked in detail at the SNP so much. If one looks at the classic industrial and working-class constituencies of the West Midlands, West Yorkshire and the north-west, they are now heavily represented by people who would not fall into that category. Having said that, that reflects a social change. We are as a society much more middle-class now than we were. There are, on all sides, people who are probably second generation—particularly immigrants, but some others—who have come through that route, but do not necessarily display it themselves. If you look at their parentage, there is a fairly good number of people who come from that same background, but it is diminishing.

In relation to expenses—and I will now put a party hat on to some extent—there is a limit that I have certainly operated to when I have chaired final selections, which was mandatory in terms of literature. I imagine the cost has come from people going to the constituency, visiting it, staying in hotels.

Professor Campbell: It is very much hidden.

Lord Hayward: It is hidden. On our side, I can think of somebody who was shortlisted for 13 constituencies, and a number who have had other smaller numbers. That is when you really clock up the costs in terms of the hidden expenses of seeking a constituency.

Q8 **Mr Shuker:** Empirically, would you agree that the all-women shortlist model has been the most successful in terms of rapidly increasing women's representation? This is not a partisan point, but broadly people would agree with that. In terms of what we are looking at with the reductions now coming, do you think there needs to be a modification to the way in which that model is applied among those parties that have applied it, to ensure that women's representation is maintained?

Professor Childs: Yes. Do you want me to say any more about it?



Mr Shuker: Do you want to expand on that, Sarah?

Professor Childs: I think the Labour party would need to take a holistic approach to the country and the consequences of these boundaries being redrawn, and consider what it is trying to get. What is its target? It sets targets for itself. In that sense, the all-women shortlist policy, however it is modified, needs to ensure that it meets the targets the party wants.

It is really important to stress that Labour is 43% or 44% female; the other parties are significantly less, and that is to do with all-women shortlists. I understand hostility to quotas, but the global evidence is also true: there is a 10 percentage point gap and most parliaments with more than 30% women use some kind of quota. The party needs to take on board what it is trying to achieve and design a mechanism that will deliver on that. Selectorates will be choosing their candidates, party members, but they will still have choice.

Lord Hayward: Statistically, it is self-evident that if you have a policy, forced or otherwise, of all-women shortlists you will finish up with a greater proportion of female representation. I said earlier on that what we are talking about here is attitudinal change. For the vast majority of protected characteristics, with the exception of disability, one is largely talking about attitudinal change. I think that attitudinal change is possible. I have written these down, but there is one constituency missing, and I apologise, Madam Chairman, because I could not remember it outside off the top of my head. I chaired three selections prior to 2010. Of those three, one selected a female and the other two selected BME candidates.

In the run-up to 2015, I chaired 13 and I cannot remember what the 13th is, but I have taken 12 that I chaired. Six of those, i.e. 50%, produced female candidates, and three of those produced BME candidates. I am talking here about whether you have memberships or open selections for constituents. I think some of the people go in with a view about the politics of the sort of person they might choose, but a fairly large number, by my experience, then decide on the best candidate.

It is fair to say that I am clear that the best candidate wins, regardless of gender or any other form of background. That is my experience. All I do is to go in as an outside chairman who has no association with the local constituency party. Therefore, I am completely independent of any of the officer influences, and that is the way it operates. It is the first time I have ever said this, but, having been through the process up to 2015, I think women respond to a slightly less rigid process of selection than men do. If you introduce a slightly less rigid system, with flexibility within the precise time limits to which the Tory party works, women candidates respond to that.

I have asked myself why that is the case, and I do not know. How does it display itself? It shows not only in mine but in other selection



processes. There is something there that says to me that there needs to be a greater degree of flexibility within the overall rule.

Mr Shuker: Rosie, I think you wanted to come in.

Professor Campbell: Yes. If you look at the overall percentages of women candidates put forward by the Conservative party and the Labour party, they are almost exactly identical at one-third. Then if you look at the percentage in target seats, it is 52% or 53% for the Labour party and 28% for the Conservative party. That is the all-women shortlists working.

However, it is also undeniable that the Conservative party have improved their representation from 9% to 16% to 21% in the House of Commons, and I think that is due to the efforts of people like Lord Hayward and Baroness Anne Jenkin. Coming back to your point, that is incremental change, which depends on the progressive attitudes and activity of particular individuals, and there can be counter-pressures. The thing that all-women shortlists provide is an institutional framework, which does not completely impose a block on those counter-pressures, but really provides some short-term or medium-term protection.

Q9 **Mr Shuker:** Great. You pre-empted my question, which is this: it appears to be that those parties that adopt the all-women shortlist model often target marginal seats where there might be a potential to gain, or might be a potential to lose, whereas it seems like most of the growth among women candidates in the Conservative party, for example, has come in safer seats. I am just going on the numbers that we have in front of us, because we all bring our anecdotal evidence to it. Let us just go on the numbers. Can you explain, either culturally or institutionally, why that might be the case?

Professor Campbell: I do not know if that is the case. I am looking at retirement seats here. Of the Labour retirement seats, which are about as safe as they come, 25 out of 40 are women. Of the Conservative retirement seats, it is 14 out of 38, which is a big improvement on previous years, but not anywhere near the Labour figure.

Moving to BME candidates, that is where there is perhaps a difference between Labour and Conservative in this regard. Last time, the Conservatives really made an effort to select—or, whether or not they made an effort, they did select—seven out of 38 of their retirement seats as BME candidates. That made a massive difference, compared to two out of 40 for Labour. I do not think this does apply to women. Because all-women shortlists are retirement as well as target, that is not quite what is happening.

Q10 **Mr Shuker:** I will just note that, in the last election, where a large number of women were selected in “winnable” seats, Labour went backwards. If you are reliant on that as a model for increasing your representation, presumably you will come up short. I forget what the



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numbers are for the Labour party in 2010 and 2015 in terms of percentage of women.

Professor Childs: What you are seeing is a percentage increase, so, despite the fact that Labour is losing its presence in the House, its percentage of women is still increasing, which you might be surprised at. It almost certainly would not happen if all-women shortlists had not been in place. Notwithstanding the decline in the number of Labour MPs overall, the percentage of women has increased up to its current position.

Lord Hayward: I touched on attitudinal change earlier on. Having chaired selections, I do not feel that there is a barrier among selections in general. I do have to ask myself whether there are variations in regional attitudes. Looking at the Tory side, I am sitting here with three Tory MPs from Hampshire—

Chair: I would like to say that I was the first woman in that line and I have recruited some great people to join me.

Lord Hayward: But I am conscious that I chaired Fareham and Gosport as well, and you have Portsmouth North. One has to say: is there an attitudinal difference among groups? The answer is that I do not know, but it is striking that you have a county like Hampshire, which is to all intents and purposes virtually 50% female, and you can look at other counties where that is not the case, even though they have been through selections. As an individual, by nature I am a statistician, but I am throwing it out as an observation. I think attitudinal change has taken place in selections, but I wonder whether it has progressed further in some parts of the country than in others.

Q11 **Chair:** On that particular point, I have been interested in this as well, having been, as I said, the first. When I became an MP in Hampshire, I was the only female Conservative MP, but now we have, as you say, nine of us. Do you think there is a certain amount of seeing that that is possible; that there is some role modelling? I do not know.

Lord Hayward: I will throw it out: I am honestly not sure. I really do not know whether there is greater willingness if you have somebody working alongside you. I would make the point, picking up on role models in a broader society, that one needs more role models, not just of female MPs, but females at the very senior level of society. Girls, people from the BME community or whatever need to see that it is possible. You have the position in Scotland where all three major parties are led by females. Therefore, it is quite reasonable that women in particular would grow up with that view.

In Great Britain in general, looking at role models—and, again, I say this without having checked the statistics—to be honest, it is major party leaders or the Chancellor that most of the population will look at and take a judgment. I am not decrying members of the Cabinet, or the Shadow Cabinet for that matter, but in general people do not know who they are. I could make a further observation about the Labour party at this point,



but I will not. In terms of looking at role models more seriously, it has to be the absolute pinnacle of the political parties that provides a role model for people, whether they should be female, BME or whatever.

Q12 **Chair:** So having a woman Prime Minister is probably a very good idea.

Lord Hayward: Yes, self-evidently, having had two females, although we have not had a female Chancellor as yet. That is a target for people. As I say, I think party leader and Chancellor are really the only people that the vast majority of the population register with.

Q13 **Ruth Cadbury:** There is one element of incentive that has not been mentioned. We have done all-women shortlists or not; we have done role models. I have not seen mention of mentoring programmes, but I believe they went very strongly in parallel as having a major difference for women in the Labour party. My understanding is that mentoring support schemes have made a massive difference to that big rise in the Conservative party. I just wanted to pick up on that, because we have not mentioned it so far.

Professor Childs: Academics of the gender and politics kind often talk about “quota plus” strategies. Quotas can be a very quick delivery; we never think that they are the solution in and of themselves. Going back to your point about attitudinal change, I would also want to push a little bit more on institutional change. The establishment of mentoring schemes—Women2Win, for example, in the Conservative party—has really been important in both expanding the supply pool, if you like, of women who want to come forward, and then ensuring that when they are up for selection they are absolutely prepared and excel in that.

There is no way that we can deny the value in that, but we always have to consider that at the end of the day, parties make effective decisions about who become MPs, because they are, in most instances, selecting candidates in those winnable seats. It is that interaction. I would not ever want to say that quotas on their own, or mentoring on its own, would be sufficient because there are still many obstacles that need to be negotiated.

While you were talking about your attitudinal change, it is fantastic—and again this would apply to Women2Win as well—but what worries me is the kind of scenario in which people like you or Anne Jenkin fall under the bus. We need to institutionalise change in the parties so that parties become much more open. That is quite important. I worry a little bit about institutional attitudes.

Professor Campbell: There are three levels to this question, both within the role model and your question. Voters do not care whether you put a man or a woman in front of them. There is now a lot of research showing that the party is much more important and they do not care, so it is not operating at that level.



There is growing research showing that the role model effect matters at the candidate level. Looking at these statistics, only about one-third of candidates are women. There is no reason why that should be inevitable, and we know that seeing more women in politics does make women more interested in politics, so that works. Also, what I think Lord Hayward was talking about was the effect on selectorates. Seeing women do the job affects the selectorates, and that, as Sarah said, is the absolutely key group that you want to change over time in terms of attitudes.

Back to the supply side, mentoring programmes really do work, and we know from the international research that unfortunately women still seem to be a little bit less confident about seeing themselves as potential candidates. The thing that makes a difference is other people telling them and encouraging them to stand. All of these supply-side activities really do make a difference.

Q14 Mr Shuker: Sarah, could you just outline factually what you have recommended in *The Good Parliament* report around quotas? I understand there is a distinction between 2020 and 2025. Why have you taken that approach?

Professor Childs: There is. There is a recommendation that suggests that, if the parties do not achieve a particular percentage, that they should institute legislation for the following election. One of the issues around introducing legislative quotas is that obviously we have permissive legislation, so parties can choose to use a sex quota. What I am suggesting is that, if the percentage of women does not increase sufficiently, Parliament as a whole should make a decision that this goes above the parties and becomes part of our electoral law that parties should use some kind of quota. I do not provide a precise quota, because that would be up for discussion, but some kind of mechanism should be introduced. I have it right here.

Q15 Angela Crawley: I am coming back to the point I made earlier around diversity and socioeconomic background. We spoke about the cost of clothing and childcare, and the implications around geography and standing in various seats, but what we did not talk about is that, for example, I was the first generation to go to university; I am from a working-class family; I grew up in a council house; and I spent ten times less than that £80,000 limit. I was inspired by role models who came before me and am the product of a mentoring scheme. But I, as a spokesperson for the SNP, focus on women and equalities, the entire broad range.

We have spent a lot of time talking about mentoring, quotas and vetting panels, which I have also chaired and been a part of. What we have not spoken about is membership engagement. If we are talking about the people who will get to the top, the people who will get to the top are the ones who are driven, who are willing to make those journeys, who are willing to make those sacrifices.



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The people who will not get there are your ordinary member, who signed up to the Conservatives, Labour, the SNP, Lib Dems or other, and joined the party with an aspiration to one day become that person. How do they get through that system? We have not spoken about parties' role to engage new members and members in general to be able to achieve the same ends, so I am interested to hear if you have given any thought to that at all.

Professor Campbell: We know from the research that people who do not fit the stereotypical, archetypal candidate are less likely to think of themselves as being one. The research also shows that face-to-face contact still really matters in changing people's behaviour. The best thing parties can do is to identify talented people who are BME, working-class or a woman, and actively encourage them to stand. They are less likely to look in the mirror and say, "I see the next candidate for" whatever the constituency is. It is practical grassroots activity, to seek people out and develop mentoring schemes, etc.

Professor Childs: I would go one stage back and ask what Parliament is doing and what more Parliament can do to reach to the non-party member. Party members are already a self-selected group. I think it is about Parliamentary outreach. It is the image that this institution portrays to people. It is about internships; it might be about residential programmes for people who are not party political yet, but might still see themselves, with encouragement, to think that this is a job they can do.

There is a mirror in the Swedish Parliament that says, "You could be the next Member of Parliament" as people go through. Parliament as an institution has a responsibility to make the non-political citizen more interested in politics so that they then expand who is already a member of a political party. There is a lot that parties and Parliament should do.

Q16 **Jess Phillips:** This is not my question, but I was not a member of the Labour party and the Labour party sent me on a course, and now I am a Member of Parliament, so there you go. It is called the "Future Candidates" and I am now one of its trustees, so those things do exist.

What I wanted to say was this: in an attitudinal change about quotas, is there any evidence that the women who were selected on all-women shortlists are in any way less qualified than any of the male parliamentarians, or in fact the women who were elected? Is there evidence to the contrary? I suppose, Lord Hayward, what you are saying is that we always have to get the best person for the job. One of the common criticisms of quotas is that it is not a meritocracy—the myth of meritocracy. Is there any evidence to suggest that those of us, including me, are less good?

Professor Campbell: There is evidence that there is no difference in terms of candidate quality, obviously, and also the voters do not know. Voters do not know who was on an all-women shortlist and who was not. We can append those references to our submission.



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Lord Hayward: Can I just pick up on the question that was asked earlier on about involvement with membership? Professor Campbell said that somebody had spent £80,000, which to be honest I am horrified about—

Professor Campbell: It could be rent.

Jess Phillips: Or lost earnings.

Lord Hayward: Maybe, but I also would be curious to know if that person is now a Member of Parliament or not. They may have spent all that money and not become a Member of Parliament. Can I make an observation about membership in general? The Tory party operates—and it is a decision not in my hands, but for the local associations—such that you either have selection through the membership, or you have selection in some form of open process. I have chaired those. If you have an open process, that means that you do not solely engage with members, and I think that is actually better for the groups that you are talking about.

If you take a number of the constituencies where there were full open primaries, all you had to be was a registered voter within the constituency to be able to turn up for the selection. Over 50% of the people who cast a vote in the constituencies that I was involved with, places like Wealden for example, were not members of the Tory party. It comes back to this question of attitude: if you are talking to a group, it is more likely that you have to fit within that group, but if you go to a broader group, it may encourage a different sort of approach.

I do not know, but I think it may well touch on the issue that you are raising about communicating with members or without. I can say here that my niece is the Labour leader of Camden Council.

Jess Phillips: She is a cracking woman.

Lord Hayward: She went through the Labour selection recently against Keir Starmer and it was a communication solely within the Labour party. I am not sure that is either good for the Labour party or good for a future MP, because they should be talking to a broader group of people.

Jess Phillips: We are not going to open things up for a while. I think that has gone well.

Lord Hayward: Thank you for your comments about my niece.

Q17 **Mrs Drummond:** Just to go back to the £80,000, are you sure that does not include being the candidate as well, or is that purely selection?

Professor Campbell: The question is very clear. It says “selection expenses”. We are also doing qualitative interviews with people. I thought this must be an error, but as I spoke to candidates I realised that, if you are thinking about lost earnings, rent, and you are going for a constituency that you really think you are going to win, perhaps it is



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worth the sacrifice. It was an outlier, but there are a large number at £40,000 or £50,000, and also quite a large number at £400 or £500. There is a lot of variation.

Q18 **Mrs Drummond:** As a candidate, if you did not get in in one election and got in the next one, you could certainly spend £80,000 and probably more.

Professor Campbell: I think this is hidden from the electorate.

Q19 **Mrs Drummond:** Absolutely. It is an extremely expensive business. Moving on to something slightly different, in particular referring to Professor Childs's report, do you think the nature of the House of Commons and the way it works has prevented women from coming forward? What changes can we make to prevent that and what sort of timescale would that look like?

Professor Childs: Gosh, I have just written a very large report, so I cannot go through all of the recommendations. The basic point is that there is no silver bullet. There is lots that Parliament can be doing, there is lots that parties can be doing, and you need to decide which of those you wish to prioritise. What is really important is that a new group of MPs has been set up, the Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion, and they will hopefully drive forward on this agenda. They are being set up as we speak. The idea is that I have given them a blueprint, if you like, but it is up to them to decide the priorities.

Absolutely, there are problems with the way this works. I undertook an audit, if you like, of the diversity and sensitivities of this place, and your Committee is the only unambiguous green light that I give it. Everything else is either amber or red, whether we are looking at the percentages of Members of Parliament or whether we are looking at the way in which the institution works and the support that IPSA provides. There is a very great deal to be done.

Given this inquiry, I would stress that this Parliament should sign up to undertaking a self-assessment informed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union's gender-sensitive parliaments framework, because that would create a dynamic to hold all these various individuals within the House. There are so many recommendations and they go to different people. This House does not have a single person or institution that can transform it. Lots of individuals—the Leader of the House, the Commission, political party leaderships, your Committee—have responsibilities, so it is really about ensuring that individuals take on the recommendations and are held to account by an institution.

What has happened, despite this place changing in many positive ways, is that it has lacked the institutional will. It is dependent on individuals expending a lot of energy and political capital to make changes. We have not really had a more holistic approach to what might change. There are lots of recommendations that could really transform things very quickly.



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In terms of this inquiry, I want to stress Section 106 of the Equality Act. I do not know whether you want me to stop and answer that later, but providing candidate diversity data would bring great transparency. The powers are already there in legislation. It would allow the public, you and others within this House to see how the party selections are progressing. Therefore, as we go through the selections, parties can be held to account by their members, by their voters and by civil society actors, to ensure that we see greater diversity.

Those powers are there. I feel very strongly that that should be commenced immediately and that, if that does not happen, you as a Committee should hold the Secretary of State to account for that decision not to, because I do not think the voluntary approach has worked or delivered.

Q20 Mrs Drummond: That was going to be one of my questions, which you have answered. Do the other panellists have any views on that or about the House of Commons changing to attract more women to put their names forward?

Professor Campbell: One of the things I find most troubling is some research Sarah and I did in 2012 about parenthood and Parliament, where we found that 45% of women MPs, compared to 28% of men, had no children. It is easier to count women's bodies than to look at some of the practical barriers. I do not think the new IPSA regime, for example, particularly helps in this regard. The issue of people with caring responsibilities, be that older dependants or children, and access to a political career is a big one, and Parliament should consider how it encourages and supports people.

Professor Childs: Just to follow up on that, there is a recommendation that the House, at the very minimum, considers a maternity/paternity parental caring leave scheme, because at the moment that is left at the informal level. It requires Members to negotiate, and both symbolically to the public, but also substantively to parents, this would be a really important recommendation for Parliament to subscribe to.

Lord Hayward: I have a very brief comment. It is more difficult for me to comment; Professor Childs has looked in detail at it, but one thing that strikes me is that many potential changes advantage one female or one BME candidate, but that same change may disadvantage others.

If you have children—and I was interested by your statistic—if you have them educated, say, in Scotland or in your constituency where your home is, it is much better to compress the working week so that you can get back to your family and your first home. Finishing at an early time benefits those MPs from the immediate area of London and the south-east, because they can then get home. I cite that as one example where a change will benefit one group of people but disadvantage others.



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Professor Campbell: There is a very radical, and probably unpopular, thing that would really help, which is job shares for MPs.

Q21 **Maria Caulfield:** I just wanted to ask a quick question about female MPs who leave; maybe they have served one term of Parliament or two. Are there any figures to show that female MPs, maybe because of the experience of the House of Commons, are more likely to retire early as opposed to male MPs?

Professor Childs: After the 2001 election, there was a lot of media coverage of apparently hordes of Labour women crying and leaving, and that was not statistically true. My understanding still is that the numbers are so small that it is difficult to draw any strong conclusions. There are quite often individual reasons. That said, the Administration Committee has reports from interviews with women MPs and from MPs who left at the last election, and I would point you to that qualitative data to look into such issues. I would also, at this point, think about the social media and other violence against women, because this is something we have underestimated as researchers, and it really needs to be taken on board.

I would worry that that will affect the supply pool of people of different types coming in—because it is not just women who might suffer particularly social media and other violence—but clearly we have to take that much more seriously than we ever have done hitherto. That is about IPSA, but it is also about this institution.

Professor Campbell: The women in Parliament who have children tend to enter Parliament when their children are, on average, four years older than those of the men who have children. That might mean that, rather than women exiting, they are choosing to enter when their children are a little bit older.

Chair: I am speaking as an MP whose youngest child was three when I was elected.

Q22 **Angela Crawley:** As someone who may want to have children in the future, this is something that I would really warrant. I think the piece of work that Professor Childs has done is incredible in bringing forward these kinds of conversations that we should have been having a really long time ago. We are asking businesses to comply with all of these things, but we do not do them here.

The key thing is engagement, as you mentioned earlier. Something someone touched on—I do not know who—was paid internships as a way to engage young people, to see that you can work in this place and you can do a large number of roles. They have to be paid at the London living wage in order for them to be able to genuinely entertain that as a possibility. If we are talking about engagement, it could be online abuse, everyday sexism or people commenting on Twitter—on which a female colleague of mine who visited as a candidate was accused of “measuring for curtains”. These examples of things that have happened to women or anyone standing would put anyone off, but the key point is that



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engagement is crucial and voters must be the most important element of this.

All of the things we are talking about are great, but my question to you is this: how do we, and how does this Committee, ensure that we engage with the voters? This Parliament is supposed to represent everyone, and it can only do that if it engages with everyone. That is my final question.

Lord Hayward: You are going much broader than a question of equalities.

Angela Crawley: Indeed.

Lord Hayward: It is an approach of politicians in general to society in general. We could debate that for hours, but it is for you as elected politicians to identify whether there are changes you can make in your behaviour. I do not necessarily mean solely in the Chamber or in constituencies, because the vast majority of MPs' work, in general, is greatly underrated in terms of both the quality and the quantity.

I will make a comment now, by which I hope I will gain the sympathy of the whole Committee: I am so irritated by journalists saying that MPs have just "returned from their holidays" when most MPs have never left anywhere. It is a much broader matter of institutions and approach, and that would impact on society in general, not just minorities, whatever they may happen to be.

Professor Campbell: We must continue to fund and develop Parliamentary outreach: things like paid internships and bringing more people into Parliament so that you can shortcut this problem with the media sensationalism and how Parliament and parliamentarians work. When you look at voters' attitudes, it is very much like the NHS: their individual experience of their own MP is great, but as a lot they are a terrible bunch. It is trying to shortcut that problem.

Professor Childs: I would suggest going back to the 2010 Speaker's Conference report, which also looked at the public engagement side of this question. There was a lot there about citizen education and young people that perhaps has not been considered as much in recent years.

It is also about asking your own parties whether they are auditing who their spokespeople are on the media and TV programmes, and holding the media to account a great deal more in terms of their representation of different kinds of Members of Parliament. We have very skewed figures in terms of the lobby journalists, and again some changes there. It is a huge question and you need to intervene at different parts of the answers to those questions.

Chair: That was an incredibly helpful session. Can I thank you on behalf of the whole Committee for your time this morning? This is the first of our evidence sessions for this inquiry, so it has been extremely useful and I am sure will stimulate a lot of further thought. Thank you.