

Barriers to Politics Working Group			
REPORT	Gender, Age and Caring Responsibilities		
KEY DECISION	No	Item No:	3
WARD	N/A		
CONTRIBUTORS	Executive Director for Resources & Regeneration		
CLASS	Part 1	Date:	18 April 2017

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides context and evidence for the Barriers to Politics Working Group to consider as part of the evidence session on barriers related to gender, age and caring responsibilities which people face when running for and progressing as a local councillor.
- 1.2. This report provides a national and London context including councillor demographics and explores campaigns and research into the barriers to politics linked to the key themes of gender, age and caring responsibilities.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. The Barriers to Politics Working Group is recommended to:
 - Note the report.
 - Consider the evidence given at the meeting.

3. CONTEXT

- 3.1. The Equality Act 2010 defines the following characteristics as protected characteristics:
 - age
 - disability
 - gender reassignment
 - marriage and civil partnership
 - pregnancy and maternity
 - race
 - religion or belief
 - sex
 - sexual orientation
- 3.2. Lewisham's Comprehensive Equality Scheme (CES) 2016-20 sets out how the Council will meet its duties to improve the quality of life and life chances of all Lewisham's

residents as well as the various equality groups afforded specific protection under the Equality Act of 2010. The scheme contains the following five overarching objectives:

- tackle victimisation, discrimination and harassment
- improve access to services
- close the gap in outcomes for our citizens
- increase mutual understanding and respect within and between communities
- increase participation and engagement.

3.3. The London Borough of Lewisham is home to 292,000 people; Lewisham has the fifth largest Inner London population size and the 13th largest in London. Between the 2001 and 2011 national Censuses the population of Lewisham increased by 30,000. By the time of the next national Census in 2021, the population of the borough is forecast to reach 321,000. Children and young people make up 25 per cent of Lewisham’s population, whilst those aged over 65 comprise of 10 per cent of the population.

4. GENDER CONTEXT

Key Facts

- At the time of the last Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2013, 36 per cent of councillors in London and 31.6 per cent of councillors nationally were female.
- 26 per cent of candidates who contested in the local elections in 2014 were female.
- In 2014, 12.3 per cent of local authority leaders in England were women.

4.1. Approximately a third of councillors were female at the time of the last Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2013 (36 per cent in London and 31.6 per cent nationally).¹ 31 per cent of councillors newly elected in 2015 were women – a slight decrease compared to the 2014 figure of 32 per cent.² The table below shows the percentage of male and female councillors at the time of each Census since 2001.³

	2001	2004	2006	2008	2010	2013
	per cent					
Male	70.7	70.3	69.3	68.4	68.5	67.3
Female	28.5	29.1	29.3	30.8	30.6	31.7
No Response	0.8	0.6	1.4	0.8	1.0	0.9

4.2. Information about candidate demographics in local elections is not routinely collected. A 2014 Survey of Local Election Candidates, published by the Elections Centre, found that 26 per cent of candidates who contested in the local elections in 2014 were female.⁴ Similarly, 26 per cent of candidates in the 2015 general election were women and 29 per cent of MPs elected were female.

¹ National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013

² Electoral Reform Society, ‘Which Women Win? The 2015 English local election’ (March 2016)

³ Vyara Apostolova & Richard Cracknell, ‘Women in Parliament and Government’, *House of Commons Library Briefing Paper* (February 2017)

⁴ Based on a sample of 13 per cent of candidates. Colin Rallings et al., ‘2014 Survey of Local Election Candidates’, *The Elections Centre* (2014)

- 4.3. On average, male councillors in England had been a councillor for 10 years, compared to women who had been councillors for 8.3 years.⁵
- 4.4. The proportion of women in leadership roles is much smaller than the proportion of men: in 2014, 12.3 per cent of local authority leaders in England were women, this compared to 16.6 per cent in 2004.⁶ Across England, 53.7 per cent of male councillors held one or more positions, such as chair or vice chair of overview and scrutiny or a cabinet member, compared to 51.4 per cent of female councillors.⁷
- 4.5. In terms of representation in leadership within a political party, 15.8 per cent of male councillors who responded to the Census were Group leaders or deputy leaders, compared to 8.7 per cent of women.⁸
- 4.6. The Census found that men and women shared priorities in terms of why they become councillors; the most prevalent reason for a man to become a councillor was to serve the community (89.6 per cent) which was also most prevalent for women (90.5 per cent).⁹
- 4.7. At the time of the Census, a greater proportion of male councillors were in full-time paid employment (21.5 per cent) than women (14.3 per cent); this is in line with the national position at the time as 22 per cent more men were in full time employment than women, with women accounting for nearly 75 per cent of the part time workforce.¹⁰ Nearly double the proportion of women said that their employer was not aware that they were a councillor (4.4 per cent) than men (2.6 per cent). On average, female councillors spent 22 hours per week on council business compared with male councillors who spent 20.2 hours per week.¹¹
- 4.8. A similar proportion of male and female councillors felt that they were effective or very effective in their role; 89.9 per cent of male councillors felt that they were effective or very effective, compared to 90.2 per cent of female councillors. A greater proportion of men would recommend being a councillor (83.7 per cent) compared to women (80.1 per cent).
- 4.9. Without their current packages of support available to councillors, a greater proportion of women felt that they would not be able to fulfil their role; 36.7 per cent of women felt that they would not be able to fulfil their role or only to a small extent without support, compared to 32.3 per cent of men.¹²
- 4.10. More women than men had received one or more training opportunities in the 12 months before the census (87.3 per cent c.f. 84 per cent), however fewer women than men had received an induction (21.8 per cent c.f. 22.2 per cent).

⁵ National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013

⁶ Ms. Gill Bryan, Ms. Margaret Gallagher, Dr. Gill Kirkup (Convenor), Professor Joan Swann & Ms. Sheila Thornton 'Exploring Women's Participation In Local Politics', *Milton Keynes Fawcett Group* (September 2016)

⁷ National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013 – analyses by gender

⁸ National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Office for National Statistics, 'Labour Market Statistics, September 2013', *Statistical Bulletin* (September 2013)

¹¹ National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013

¹² Ibid

5. GENDER RESEARCH

- 5.1. A Hewlett Packard internal report quoted in *The Confidence Code* and other articles found that men apply for a job when they meet only 60 per cent of the qualifications, but women apply only if they meet 100 per cent of them.¹³ This research has been disputed by women's leadership coach Tara Sophia Mohr in her Harvard Business Review blog post; Mohr conducted a survey and found that 41 per cent of women and 46 per cent of men indicated that the main reason for not applying for jobs is because they believed they needed the qualifications not to do the job well, but to be hired in the first place.¹⁴ Mohr argued that, the reason for the different approaches to applications is not related to confidence, but that candidates need more information about how application processes work.
- 5.2. All major political parties actively campaign to encourage women to enter politics at a national and local level. 'Amplify' is the name of the Labour Women website launched by Harriet Harman MP to provide a forum for women to discuss what they want from their government and their local authorities, as well as discuss ideas and campaigns. Additionally, the Jo Cox Women in Leadership Programme, run in the memory of Jo Cox MP, will offer training and mentoring programmes over the next five years to train hundreds of women to be future leaders.
- 5.3. In September 2016, the Fawcett Society published 'Exploring Women's Participation in Local Politics', an observational study of Milton Keynes Council Meetings to explore whether there were gender differences and/or inequalities in the way Council business was seen to be carried out in public fora.¹⁵ The report observed major gender differences in distribution of roles and activities and participation in meetings.
- 5.4. Women councillors were over-represented in committees such as corporate parenting, health and adult social care.¹⁶ Women were under-represented in areas such as audit and budget scrutiny. Overall, women were very well represented on the Overview and Scrutiny Groups; out of the 26 members involved, nearly half (12) were women; yet only one of the five was chaired by a woman. Although Women were under-represented as members of financially-focused committees, such as Budget Scrutiny Committee, the Milton Keynes Fawcett Group found that they were not under-represented as Chairs of such committees. It has been argued that experience of finance and planning helps women to rise to the most senior roles in local government.¹⁷
- 5.5. The Fawcett Society's observational study found that in Full Council meetings, female councillors made up 33 per cent of those councillors present in the meeting, but were

¹³ Claire Shipman & Katty Kay, 'The Confidence Code', *HarperBusiness* (April 2014)

¹⁴ Tara Sophia Mohr, 'Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100 per cent Qualified', *Harvard Business Review* (August 2014)

¹⁵ Ms. Gill Bryan, Ms. Margaret Gallagher, Dr. Gill Kirkup (Convenor), Professor Joan Swann & Ms. Sheila Thornton 'Exploring Women's Participation In Local Politics', *Milton Keynes Fawcett Group* (September 2016)

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ E.g. Susanna Ruskin, 'Where are the women? The 'pale, male' council leaders driving the northern powerhouse', *The Guardian* (February 2016)

only responsible for 19 per cent of all interventions by councillors.¹⁸ Women were observed to join discussions late in meetings; by this time many members of the public had left the chamber and hence did not observe these contributions.

- 5.6. The majority of actions from the Milton Keynes Fawcett Group report are directed to political parties and relate to selection and party strategies, however the report of the Milton Keynes Fawcett Group recommended that councillors review their behaviour to make space for less experienced colleagues: both male and female.
- 5.7. Members of the Milton Keynes Fawcett Group will be present at the meeting to discuss their research and findings.

6. AGE CONTEXT

Key Facts

- According to the Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2013, the average age of a councillor in London was 56.5 years (cf. 60.2 nationally).
- Around one in eight councillors are under 45.
- The proportion aged 70 or over has increased from 13.8 per cent to 22.2 per cent between 2004 and 2013.
- Approximately 32 per cent of 18-24 year olds and 32 per cent of 25 to 34 year olds vote in local elections; this compares to 43 per cent of 18-25 year olds and 54 per cent of 25-34 year olds voting in the previous General Election.

- 6.1. According to the Census of Local Authority Councillors in 2013, the average age of a councillor in London was 56.5 years (cf. 60.2 nationally); 10.2 per cent of councillors in London were aged under 35 years, 46.7 per cent were aged over 60 years. Across England, the average age of councillors has increased over recent years, the average age recorded in 2010 was 59.7, up from 57.8 in 2004. Around one in eight were aged under 45. The proportion aged 70 or over increased from 13.8 per cent to 22.2 per cent between 2004 and 2013.
- 6.2. The proportion of retired councillors has increased from 36.8 per cent in 2001 to 46.6 per cent at the time of the 2013 Census of Local Authority Councillors; this is in spite of increasing employment rates for both older men and women in relation to the population as a whole.¹⁹ At the same time, the proportion of councillors in full-time employment has decreased steadily from 27.2 per cent in 2001 to 19.2 per cent at the time of the 2013 Census, whereas there has been very little variation in the proportions of councillors who are self-employed or work part-time between 2001 and 2013.
- 6.3. According to the Census of Local Authority Councillors, younger councillors were less likely to report that their councils were fully committed across all council activities compared to those in older age groups (e.g. enabling people to have an influence locally through engagement programmes and encouraging people to be more engaged with democratic processes). For example, 18.5 per cent of councillors aged under 25 reported that their council was fully committed to having mechanisms to organise

¹⁸ Ms. Gill Bryan, Ms. Margaret Gallagher, Dr. Gill Kirkup (Convenor), Professor Joan Swann & Ms. Sheila Thornton 'Exploring Women's Participation In Local Politics', *Milton Keynes Fawcett Group* (September 2016)

¹⁹ Daniel Chandler and Gemma Tetlow, 'Employment and retirement – explaining recent trends', *Institute for Fiscal Studies* (October 2014)

inquiries about contentious issues, compared to 40.6 per cent of councillors aged 70 and over.

- 6.4. In terms of the distribution of roles, 51 per cent of councillors under 35 held one or more positions, compared to 54 per cent of those aged over 65; 6 per cent of councillors aged under 40 were either a leader of the local authority or deputy leader, compared to 5 per cent of over 60s.
- 6.5. Councillors from minority ethnic backgrounds had a slightly younger age on average (55.1 years old in 2013 and 52.9 years old in 2010) than other councillors (60.4 years old in 2013 and 60.0 years old in 2010).
- 6.6. Based on the 2013 Census of Local Authority Councillors, a greater proportion of men were aged over 65 (46.2 per cent) compared to women (38.6 per cent). At the younger age bracket, 8.4 per cent of male councillors are aged under 40, compared to 6.7 per cent of female councillors.

7. AGE RESEARCH

- 7.1. Key to understanding barriers to politics is an understanding of wider political interest and participation; 43 per cent of 18-24 year olds voted in 2015 general election.²⁰ However, the greatest shift in voter turnout was by both young men and women, with a decrease in 8 percentage points of young men voting in 2015 and a 5 percentage point increase in women voters aged 18-24.
- 7.2. Detailed information about local election turnout is not available, however the 2013 Post Election Survey conducted by BMG Research for the Electoral Commission estimated local election turnout at 51 per cent.²¹ Of those aged 18-24 and those aged 25 to 34, 32 per cent voted in each age bracket. Conversely, in general elections a spike in turnout can be observed between 18-24 year olds and 25-34 year olds; in 2015 an 11 percentage point increase can be observed (from 43 per cent of 18-24 year olds to 54 per cent of 25-34 year olds). Those aged over 65 were most likely to vote in local elections (72 per cent). The 2013 Survey following the local elections found that 53 per cent of voters and non-voters knew 'not very much' or 'nothing at all' about the election.²² Recent research in to young people's engagement with the EU referendum found that young people are less likely to vote in elections or join a political party, but are more likely to sign a petition, attend a protest and join a campaign on a singular issue.²³
- 7.3. Richard Berry and Professor Patrick Dunleavy, managing editor and Co-Director of Democratic Audit at the LSE Public Policy Group, in their report 'Engaging young voters with enhanced election information' argued that online resources would give better access to information and hence engage a younger audience better, who were predominately online. There is no central source of ward-level election results. The

²⁰ Ipsos MORI, 'How Britain voted in 2015' (August 2015)

²¹ Electoral Commission, '2013 local elections post-polling public opinion research' (May 2013)

²² Richard Berry & Patrick Dunleavy, 'Engaging young voters with enhanced election information', *Democratic Audit UK* (March 2014)

²³ Katy Owen and Caroline Macfarland, 'A Generation Apart: Were younger people left behind by the EU referendum?', *CoVi(Common Vision)* (July 2016)

BBC and other media outlets only publish summaries of results for each council, while the Electoral Commission does not publish any local election results online.²⁴ The research conducted by Democratic Audit UK recognises that young people are less likely to be settled in a particular area and movement between local authority areas contributes to lower levels of political engagement and voter registration.²⁵

- 7.4. The report ‘Young people’s politics Political interest and engagement amongst 14–24 year olds’ supported by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, noted a limited number of opportunities available for young people to participate in the political process.²⁶ Where young people acknowledged that there were opportunities, they felt they lacked knowledge about the process of engagement. Underpinning this view was a perception that politicians often dismiss the views of young people as childish and unrealistic. Young people in the politically uninterested groups seem to engage politically when issues have direct personal relevance to them or to their local community.
- 7.5. Research by the think-tank the International Longevity Centre for Help the Aged has found that for some, the beginning of retirement can result in a period of greater community engagement; involvement with political groups is particularly high amongst those aged 65 to 69 although participation declines swiftly with age.²⁷

8. CARING RESPONSIBILITIES CONTEXT

Key Facts

- Over a quarter of councillors in London had caring responsibilities at the time of the 2013 Census of Local Authority Councillors (28.8 per cent).
- 18.7 per cent of councillors in London had caring responsibilities for a child.
- Nationally, 24.6 per cent of male councillors had caring responsibilities, compared to 35.1 per cent of female councillors; this disparity is in line with the population as a whole.

- 8.1. Over a quarter of councillors in London had caring responsibilities (28.8 per cent); of the total number of councillors in London, 18.7 per cent had caring responsibilities for a child. In the context of employment status, 2.8 per cent of councillors in London described themselves as not in paid work due to the fact they were looking after a home/family.

Caring Responsibilities For:	Male (per cent)	Female (per cent)
Child/Children	12.9	17.9
Partner	8	7.8
Relative	5.6	11.9
Other	1.4	3.2
One or more caring resp.	24.6	35.1
No caring resp.	75.4	64.9

²⁴Richard Berry & Patrick Dunleavy, ‘Engaging young voters with enhanced election information’, *Democratic Audit UK* (March 2014)

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Clarissa White, Sara Bruce & Jane Ritchie, ‘Young people’s politics Political interest and engagement amongst 14–24 year olds’, *Joseph Rowntree Foundation* (2000)

²⁷ International Longevity Centre, ‘Voice: a briefing paper on the voice of older people in society’ (2008)

- 8.2. A disproportionate number of female councillors have caring responsibilities than men (35.1 per cent of women, compared to 24.6 per cent of men).²⁸ This disparity is in line with the overall population as 57.7 per cent of unpaid carers were female at the time of the United Kingdom Census 2011.²⁹
- 8.3. Approximately 6.5m people in UK (10 per cent of the population) have unpaid caring responsibilities, this is defined as looking after an ill, older or disabled family member, friend or partner.³⁰ At the time of the 2011 Census, there were 18.2 million families in the UK and 7.7 million families had dependent children; of these 1.6 million were lone parent households.
- 8.4. In the London Borough of Lewisham, a carer's allowance of £9.40 per hour plus travelling expenses can be claimed to pay someone to take up a member's caring responsibilities while they are away from the home on Council business; this payment is based on the London Living Wage.
- 8.5. Although allowances are available to all councillors in Lewisham, in 2014-15 only 5 Lewisham councillors made claims for travel, subsistence or carer's allowances. Allowance claims by Lewisham councillors totalled £600 in 2014-15.

9. CARING RESPONSIBILITIES RESEARCH

- 9.1. In an article in *C'llr Magazine* for the LGiU in December 2015, Lewisham Councillor Gareth Siddorn explained that little attention is paid to the low representation of councillors with caring responsibilities for children.³¹ He argued that a significant increase in allowances is neither economically viable nor politically palatable but that consideration should be given to how the wider system is structured, potentially with fewer councillors who are better supported and more representative of the communities they serve.
- 9.2. Evidence given to the Communities and Local Government Committee by the Centre for Women and Democracy stated that hours and commitments expected of councillors are very high, and not always geared to the needs of people who work or who have caring responsibilities. The Centre for Women and Democracy submitted that councils should give active consideration to their working practices, and, in particular, to the level of "professionalisation".³²
- 9.3. The Centre for Women and Democracy provided evidence suggesting that women are often particularly concerned about physical security, especially when working alone. The Communities and Local Government Committee were told that women in particular find the idea of being "on call" 24 hours a day, combined with personal details

²⁸ National Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013

²⁹ Office for National Statistics, 'Full story: The gender gap in unpaid care provision: is there an impact on health and economic position?' (May 2013)

³⁰ Number of carers in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland based on the United Kingdom Census 2011

³¹ Councillor Gareth Siddorn, 'Looking for a Better Balance', *C'llr Magazine* (December 2015)

³² House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, 'Councillors on the frontline', *Sixth Report of Session 2012-13* (January 2013)

such as homes addresses being public, particularly worrying. This was particularly true for women who were living alone or with children.³³

10. SUMMARY

- 10.1. In local elections, female candidates are proportionately more likely to be elected than men. Nevertheless, women are underrepresented as only a quarter of candidates who stand in local elections are female and a third of councillors at the time of the 2013 Census were female. The research presented within this report suggests that this could be due to a lack of information about the election processes, and a tendency for women to be less likely than men to apply for positions when they are unsure about whether or not they will be successful in attaining the role.
- 10.2. In the context of political apathy, voter turnout suggests that young people are disengaged in local politics until they are much older than they are with national politics. The research considered as part of this report suggests that this is in part about the way information is presented, and the way in which they experienced and are involved in the local political sector from a young age.
- 10.3. Male councillors are disproportionately represented amongst younger and older councillors; 8.4 per cent of male councillors are aged under 40 compared to 6.7 per cent of female councillors of the same age; 46.2 per cent of male councillors are aged over 65, compared to 38.6 per cent of female councillors.
- 10.4. A disproportionate number of female councillors have caring responsibilities than men (35.1 per cent of women, compared to 24.6 per cent of men) although this is in line with disparity observed within the population as a whole. A greater proportion of councillors have unpaid caring responsibilities for a relative or partner compared with the population as a whole, however people with caring responsibilities for dependent children are underrepresented. Arrangements for councillors including allowances are available to Lewisham Councillors, but these are not regularly claimed in practice.

11. EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. The equality implications are set out in the body of this report.

12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report at this time.

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

³³ House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, 'Councillors on the frontline', *Sixth Report of Session 2012–13* (January 2013)