

Appendix A

Because it's 2017:

Devolution, local government and gender representation

December 2016

Summary:

1. The UK's political system is at a pivotal point, with the first combined authority mayors elected next year, and ongoing devolution negotiations across the country. Changing local governance structures and upcoming elections offer an opportunity to think afresh and encourage women to become involved in local politics.
2. At the moment, women make up just 32% of local councillors in England, 27% in Wales and 24% in Scotland (Fawcett Society 2016). The picture is worse when we focus on local leadership: just 12.3% of local authority leaders in England are women (2014), compared to 16.6% ten years earlier.
3. Besides the significant under-representation these figures demonstrate, there are two additional reasons to be concerned. Firstly, a lack of women in local and sub-regional government results in a democratic deficit. Women are disproportionately affected by services under local government control, such as social care and childcare; for example, on average women can expect to need social care services for twice as long as men¹. As more power is devolved to local and sub-regional levels there is a real risk that this will reinforce existing gender inequalities. As new democratic institutions and systems are set up, we should ensure they promote gender equality rather than restrict it.
4. Secondly, there is a pipeline issue. Local government is and should be a key talent pipeline for combined authority leadership and directly-elected mayoral posts. Only four of the eighteen directly elected mayors are women, and the major parties' candidates for combined authority mayors are mostly men. If women are to be councillors, lead members, chairs or mayors of combined authorities, it is vital that local and sub-regional government also becomes more gender balanced.
5. While a number of organisations such as the Fawcett Society and Electoral Reform Society are campaigning to improve the representation of women at the local and sub-regional level, there is an absence of evidence for 'what works' in developing pipelines of successful female politicians, based on previous initiatives in both the UK and internationally. The aim of this research is to examine previous efforts and to test which could be most successfully applied to the UK context. We will publish a report on trends in women's political representation in local and sub-regional government in the UK and in several other countries. Alongside data analysis we will examine what initiatives have worked both nationally and internationally to build stronger pipelines. To launch the research and build a high profile for the work we will hold an event early in the research programme to bring together key actors in the UK with international speakers who can share their countries' experiences.

¹ Comas-Herrera A and Wittenberg R (2011) *Expected lifetime costs of social care for people aged 65 and over in England*, LSE PSSRU
http://www.pssru.ac.uk/pdf/uc/uc2010/uc2010_expectedlifetimecosts.pdf

6. Our objective is to scope the potential for a scheme which would bring about a step change in women's local political representation over the next five years and continuing into the longer term, and establish evidence for how such a scheme could be designed to be most effective. Our long-term ambition is to bring about the positive action necessary to ensure that fairer democratic representation becomes achievable.

Project Proposal:

7. Researchers
 - 7.1 Carys Roberts (Research Fellow)
 - 7.2 Clare McNeil (Associate Director)

Report

8. We will produce a report comparing countries that have devolved political systems, how they perform on gender diversity measures and their strategies and activities to improve representation.
9. In our country profiles, we will include:
 - 9.1 Proportion of political leadership positions at regional, sub-regional or local level occupied by women (where this data is available), and how this proportion compares to gender diversity at the national level for each country.
 - 9.2 Proportion of councillors or equivalent who are women, and success rate of female candidates over time, for both candidate selection and elections.
 - 9.3 Key identified barriers to greater gender representation, such as childcare, unsocial hours, allowances, maternity leave and time commitment, as well as any evidence of systemic bias or discrimination.
 - 9.4 Measures that have been taken to improve gender diversity at local and national level and how successful they have been – such as the Canadian Liberal Party's 'Invite her to run' campaign, and the German Helene Weber Kolleg which provides support to women in voluntary local government positions to progress as well as mentor prospective female candidates. We will also examine the role of quotas and all-female shortlists.
 - 9.5 Background information on the position of women in public life within each country, as well as the design of the electoral system and of devolved structures, to provide context for the above figures and to inform comparison with the UK.
10. We will make recommendations for what political leaders in local government and national government and other key actors can do to help build a stronger pipeline of female talent. We will also identify what could be learnt from promising initiatives in these countries to inform the design of a UK scheme to increase gender representation in local government
11. We anticipate comparing the UK with Canada, Germany, and one of Spain, the Netherlands, Finland or France. Our criteria for selection are that the country is comparable to the UK but has key differences in the political system or levels of representation that make comparisons informative; that decentralised government

has an important role within national politics; and that there are innovative initiatives to improve gender representation in the country.

12. Ideally we would like our set of countries to demonstrate different models of sub-regional governance which may create different opportunities for women (and other groups) to reach leadership positions, as previous research commissioned by the LGA has highlighted a concern that the combined authority mayoral models may have limitations². We will select the third country following further scoping at the beginning of the report to determine which country best meets these criteria.
13. Research will be desk-based including a literature review and analysis of publicly available data, supplemented by interviews with international organisations and campaigners running initiatives of interest. For the UK profile, we will examine in depth the data relating to gender representation within both local government and combined authorities specifically.
14. Local government is also a pipeline for parliament, where only 29.4% of members are women. While this project will not focus on national representation, and we acknowledge that the devolution agenda might change the direction local politicians take in their political career, we recognise that there remains a pipeline between local and central government, which further strengthens the argument for achieving greater gender equality within local government.
15. While this project will focus on gender representation, we also recognise the lack of diversity in leadership with respect to other minority groups, including those with a disability, low-income groups and BAME individuals. We hope that this work will identify systemic barriers and ways to overcome them that would also be relevant to these groups, and will look to explore opportunities for further work in these areas upon completion of the project. While maintaining a focused scope, we will also seek to reflect on the intersection of these characteristics, by considering which groups of women are more or less likely to gain leadership positions and exploring the reasons for this through our interviews.
16. Alongside a **visually appealing short report** we will produce **a set of online graphics for use on social media**, demonstrating the gender gap in local government and how this compares across countries. We find this to be an effective way of publicising our work and spreading key messages without requiring stakeholders with less time to read the whole report.

Event

17. We will hold a launch event to ensure a high profile for the research programme, and to establish a group of engaged stakeholders to support the aims and objectives of the programme. We will present our research programme and invite international as well as UK speakers to reflect on the causes of gender inequality at local and sub-regional level, and what might work to improve the situation. This event will bring together campaigners, national politicians, councillors, and policy specialists working in devolution. We will use IPPR, IPPR North and the LGA's extensive networks to bring together a diverse and influential group of people. The panel will include speakers from local and central government, combined authorities and our selected

² Hambleton R (2015) *English Devolution: learning lessons from international models of sub-national governance*, LGA http://www.local.gov.uk/documents/10180/7632544/3.2+English+devolution_06-WEB.pdf/24c5a48b-744c-4ba4-8736-2277d9fa6e67

countries where possible. We will include politicians from a range of political parties, will invite both women and men engaged in this agenda to participate.

18. This event will be one in a series of events that we hope to fund separately alongside this project. Other events we are hoping to run will focus on:

18.1 The Northern Powerhouse, specifically the role of Mayor and how a pipeline of women candidates can be ensured. This would be in partnership with IPPR North.

18.2 Holyrood, and what institutional design lessons can be learned for Westminster and the House of Commons. This would be in partnership with IPPR Scotland.

18.3 Women as national leaders, with a US speaker reflecting on Hillary Clinton's campaign experience and how women can overcome barriers to top leadership positions.

Impact:

19. We would like to start the work in January so that we can hold the event ahead of or near the local and regional elections in May, when attention will be on the candidates and democratic structures.

20. Our key methods for influence will include:

20.1 The launch event bringing together key stakeholders with international speakers;

20.2 A press release with easily understood and striking statistics on representation as well as key findings on international initiatives;

20.3 A social media strategy including eye-catching infographics;

20.4 Engagement with political parties and stakeholders to take forward promising initiatives;

21. IPPR has a strong track record of leading thinking and action in this space. In particular, through IPPR North and more recently IPPR Scotland we have influenced the direction of devolution, with reports such as [Decentralisation Decade](#) (2014) laying a roadmap for radically devolving powers, and [Divided Democracy](#) (2013) highlighting political inequality in the UK. Our events across our three offices regularly attract high profile individuals from across national and local government.

Budget:

22. Total project costs: £44,800.

About us:

23. **IPPR is the UK's leading progressive think tank.** We are an independent registered charity with more than 40 staff members, paid interns and visiting fellows. Our main office is in London, with IPPR North, IPPR's dedicated think tank for the North of England, operating out of offices in Newcastle and Manchester, and IPPR Scotland, IPPR's dedicated think tank for Scotland, operating out of offices in Edinburgh.

24. Our purpose is to conduct and promote research into, and the education of the public in, the economic, social and political sciences, science and technology, the voluntary sector and social enterprise, public services, and industry and commerce.

25. IPPR produces rigorous and independent policy research, covering the full range of local and national policy debates. With the support of our experienced and expert trustees and Policy Advisory Council, we seek to influence all political parties and

decision-makers at all levels of government and beyond. Our [trustees](#) are responsible for overall governance of the charity and come from varied political and non-political backgrounds, such as media, advertising, finance and academia. Trustees are appointed for their independent expertise and for being distinguished in their fields

26. We work with a wide range of partners and stakeholders from across the country to improve the evidence base for, and effectiveness of, public policy, and our international partnerships extend IPPR's influence and reputation across the world
27. Our current research and policy work is focused around three priority areas:
 - 27.1 **Combining fiscal realism with a plan for deep reform of British capitalism**

There are significant long-term pressures on the UK's public finances which require priorities to be set for spending, new sources of revenue to be found, and new fiscal rules. Allied to these tasks must be a strategy for shifting the structure and character of British capitalism that learns the lessons of the financial crisis, overcomes longstanding economic weaknesses, reforms core consumer markets and provides the basis for full employment and rising living standards.
 - 27.2 **Developing relational public services and a more democratic statecraft**

Over-reliance on targets and markets to improve public services has become exhausted, along with trust in government. A new model of reform should be more relational, local and democratic, while not conceding on quality or value of money. Across a range of service areas, this requires a balance to be struck between a strategic state, democratic institutions, autonomous but accountable providers, world-class workforces, a vibrant civil society and empowered citizens.
 - 27.3 **Shaping a post-crash social politics**

The narrative of 'broken Britain' and the 'big society' has itself broken down. We need an alternative account of the pressures and potential in British society today, rooted in everyday lives and experiences. This can inform a new partnership between government, society and citizens on issues ranging from family life, financial pressures, social security, good neighbourhoods and personal relationships and wellbeing.
28. IPPR publishes more than 60 [reports](#) each year, addressing a wide range of research and policy questions. Recent publications have covered topics as diverse as youth unemployment, childcare, social isolation among older people and energy market reform.
29. We also publish [Juncture](#), our quarterly journal of politics and ideas, which showcases the best in British and international thinking for achieving lasting progressive change. Recent *Juncture* authors include [David Runciman](#), [Thomas Piketty](#), Elizabeth Anderson and [Roberto Unger](#).
30. Our website is one of the most visited of all British think tanks and we lead our sector in the use of social media.