

Put Disabled people at the heart of Wales' politics

Top Line

Over one in five people of working age in Wales have a disability.¹ As many as one in three people of retirement age are believed to have a disability. But this prevalence is not reflected in Wales' political leadership.

Key Asks

We are calling for all political parties to commit to:

- publish anonymised data on the number of self-identified disabled candidates that a party is fielding in the 2026 election;
- end - before January 2022 - electoral expenditure limits on all forms of disability related expenditure (including Easy Read and Braille versions of manifestos); and
- establish - before January 2022 - a publicly-funded access to elected office fund, which provides funding to address candidates' disability-related expenditure.

Stats

- 86% of 700 respondents to a Senedd Commission consultation considered that costs related to an individual's disability should not count towards expenditure limits for political parties and candidates²

Context

This is a complex problem. It is about disabled people being willing to put themselves forward as candidates. It is about political parties being willing to select disabled people. And it is about the public being willing to vote disabled people into office.

Background info

Anecdotal evidence from disabled people who have sought to become candidates with political parties has indicated that there is often an emphasis on canvassing (i.e. physically knocking on doors) as a key aspect in the role of a candidate. Disabled people have reported that they have been asked if they would be able to cope with this. This effectively puts the onus on an individual to overcome society's barriers related to disability, rather than the desirable situation where political parties are actively seeking to facilitate disabled people's participation.

In addition, there is currently a perverse disincentive in our electoral system for political parties to select disabled candidates. This is because if a party spends money on equipment or other reasonable adjustments for the candidate, their limit for spending money on actual campaigning is reduced.

¹ <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Equality-and-Diversity/Disability/summaryofeconomicactivityinwales-by-year-disabledstatus-fromapril2013>

² Explanatory Memorandum to the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Act 2020, Paragraph 97.

The Explanatory Memorandum to the Senedd and Elections Wales Act 2020 noted that on 24 September 2018:

“the First Minister wrote to the Llywydd to indicate that the Welsh Government agreed with the Assembly Commission that... costs attributable to an individual’s disability should be exempt from electoral expenditure limits. The First Minister also stated that the Welsh Government’s view was that it would be more appropriate for these matters to be addressed through secondary legislation.”³

Almost two years later, this secondary legislation has not been put in place.

Leonard Cheshire would also like to see all disability-related expenditure exempted from electoral expenditure limits, not only expenditure related to a candidate’s own disability. This would include, for example, the cost of producing the content for an Easy Read version or a Braille version of a party’s manifesto. Again, the current system perversely provides a disincentive for political parties in engaging with people with disabilities. This in turn will play a contributing factor in dissuading disabled people from thinking that standing for election is ‘not for us.’

Parliamentary Questions:

³ Explanatory Memorandum, Senedd and Elections Wales Act 2020, page 32.