



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

The Presiding Officer

Karen Adam MSP
Convener
Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

By email

6 March 2025

Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter of 19 December 2024.

I am grateful to the Committee for the time it has taken to consider recommendation 6 from the cross-party audit report *A Parliament for All*.

The advisory group (which was set up to monitor progress on implementing the recommendations, and includes cross-party MSPs and external experts) considered the letter at its meeting on 28 January 2025.

It is clear from your letter, and from the issues raised in the Committee's evidence session, that there are still many barriers facing women as they enter the world of politics and indeed once they become elected representatives.

Members of the advisory group discussed, for example, challenges faced by politicians in dealing with online comment. Members noted the importance of understanding the tools available within the platforms, and the importance of support networks for elected Members, including in particular encouraging women to actively support other women online.

As you heard from your panels of witnesses, while the significantly improved representation this session is welcome. It is important that we continue to make progress on the work being done.

As your letter mentions, this will require long-term cultural change, and the advisory group will consider what further steps could be taken to make progress. The recommendations from the audit are just one part of that, with the Parliament and committees having a key role to play. Revisiting these issues periodically would allow any improvements to be tracked. In your letter, you mentioned the equal representation toolkit created by Engender. While this can be used by political parties, it could also be useful for supporting scrutiny of their representatives in future evidence sessions.

On behalf of the advisory group, thank you again for the consideration and commitment the Committee has shown in taking forward these recommendations. I look forward to continuing to work together to make progress on the change we all want to see.

Yours sincerely

Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP
Presiding Officer