

Statement on Dignity and Respect Survey Results 2019

As Chair of the Assembly Commission, Party Leaders and Chair of the Standards of Conduct Committee, we have received a copy of the report, prepared by the Assembly's Director of Engagement, on this year's dignity and respect survey.

Assembly Members, their staff and Assembly Commission staff were invited to participate and we are grateful to everyone who provided their views which has enabled us to focus on areas for further improvement. This year, we have seen greater participation in the survey with 177 people taking part. Although the sample remains small, we value the views expressed and they will contribute to our ongoing work on dignity and respect.

Since October 2018, work has taken place to strengthen and improve our policies, guidance, support and to test the accessibility of our procedures. We were pleased to note the report findings that over 80% of participants knew how to access information on how to report inappropriate behaviour and where to access advice if they were unsure. This is an improvement on last year and work is continuing, especially through the induction and refresher training.

Following an in-depth consultation, our Dignity and Respect policy was approved by the Assembly in May 2018. As Wales' principal democratic institution, we now have a responsibility to act in accordance with the high standards set out and to lead by example.

While the report tells us that there is a decrease in the number of people who have experienced some form of inappropriate behaviour over the last 12 months the figures remain of concern and are not compatible with the inclusive, harassment-free environment we set out in previous statements.

Time and effort have been invested into improving our processes and implementing the recommendations of the Committee on Standards of Conduct's report "Creating the Right Culture". A programme of awareness training was rolled out across all political parties, and Commission staff, with the aim of embedding a more inclusive culture and to address the issues that were brought to light. Systems have been improved and awareness raising will continue into the future. However, feedback from the survey suggests that personal behaviours and how we conduct ourselves on a day to day basis constitute an issue that still needs to be addressed.

The majority of participants, over 80%, stated that they had not experienced any form of inappropriate behaviour. It is therefore a small cohort of individuals who are responsible for the issues reported in the survey. However, the actions of a few tarnish us all and the reputation of the Assembly. Individually, we each have responsibility to bring about the cultural changes we seek to achieve – either

through appropriately challenging individuals or by managing our own personal conduct more effectively.

Positively, the report indicates that there is evidence of people challenging or calling out forms of inappropriate behaviour and we are pleased to see that individuals are doing that. We know that calling out inappropriate language, tone of voice or other issues affecting an individual's dignity can often be an effective way of putting a stop to it or drawing attention to the impact caused by careless comments or inappropriate behaviour.

A new campaign will take place across the summer and into the autumn to pledge that we will not be bystanders when we witness any form of inappropriate behaviour. It must be challenged. All of us, throughout the organisation must take personal responsibility for our behaviour so that it is consistent with the Dignity and Respect policy. We must also support individuals, empowering them to come forward so that their complaints or concerns can be resolved.

As politicians, we often talk about developing a kinder type of politics. This does not limit itself to how we speak to each other in the Chamber or on social media channels. It means at all times, in and around the Senedd, Tŷ Hywel, in constituency offices or wherever our work takes us. And it does not mean politicians alone. All managers of staff need to consider how disempowering it is to be on the receiving end of behaviour that affects an individual's dignity.

As leaders of the organisation we are united in our view we need to take affirmative action to address this issue. To this end, and in view of the feedback from the survey, the Call It Out campaign will include a pledge committing us not to be a bystander when we see behaviour or hear language that affects the dignity of another. Part of the campaign will also provide practical solutions and tools to help individuals challenge the impact on them when they are on the receiving end of such behaviour. We are giving this campaign our full support and expect everyone with any form of leadership or management responsibility to take this issue seriously.

Elin Jones, Llywydd

Mark Drakeford, Leader of the Welsh Labour group

Paul Davies, Leader of the Welsh Conservative group

Adam Price, Leader of the Plaid Cymru group

Mark Reckless, Leader of the Brexit group

Jayne Bryant, Chair of the Standards of Conduct Committee