

# Fawcett Society

# Reforming Parliament – The Cost of the Harassment Scandal

**Information note**

The Fawcett Society is the UK's leading charity campaigning for gender equality and women's rights at work, at home and in public life. Our vision is a society in which women and girls in all their diversity are equal and truly free to fulfil their potential creating a stronger, happier, better future for us all.

We publish authoritative research to educate, inform and lead the debate; we bring together politicians, academics, grassroots activists and wider civil society to develop innovative, practical solutions and we campaign with women and men to make change happen.

**Reforming Parliament – the Cost of the Harassment Scandal**

In the year that marks the 100th anniversary of the first votes for women, the Fawcett Society's focus is on removing the barriers to women's participation in political life by driving change at political party, parliamentary and local government level.

There are a number of different strands to the work the Society is carrying out but one aspect of our current focus is on the culture within Parliament and political parties. The recent harassment scandal has shone a spotlight on that culture and the scale of sexual harassment is beginning to be uncovered.

Parliament has taken some action to try to address concerns about inappropriate behaviour, notably through the Cross-Party Working Group on an Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy (the Working Group). Although the Working Group has published some important proposals, further work is needed to develop these, and it is important to note that they cover those working on the parliamentary estate and not those working within political party structures.

There are still relatively few first-hand accounts of the sexual harassment that can occur within those structures and the cost of that harassment. That cost includes the impact on individual women who experience harassment and the wider impact on women in public life more generally and on society as a whole. Obtaining first-hand accounts of harassment is important for a variety of reasons:

* To provide an evidence base for developing the recommendations currently being considered by the Working Group and maintain political pressure to ensure that these recommendations are implemented;
* To document the experiences of and give a voice to women who have experienced harassment through their engagement in politics;
* To challenge some aspects of the way in which the sexual harassment scandal has been reported in the media;
* To help the wider public understand the reality of harassment and build awareness of the need for change at Westminster and beyond.

The Fawcett Society is working with Hogan Lovells, a global law firm which is providing pro bono (free) assistance, to gather and analyse the testimony of women in politics who have experienced sexual harassment. The purpose of the analysis will be to draw out general themes from women's testimony and identify possible policy responses. The findings of the report will be published in an online report in the autumn of 2018 and publicised at an event in parliament. The report will not identify the women that have given evidence to the project, either directly or indirectly. With permission Fawcett would also like to publish some or all of the testimony (anonymised and with any identifying details removed) to create a public record using women’s own voices of the nature and impact of sexual harassment in our politics.

**Who are we hoping to obtain evidence from?**

We would like to obtain evidence from a wide range of women who have experienced sexual harassment while working in the political environment, including

* MPs
* those working/ volunteering in the parliamentary estate,
* those working/ volunteering within political party structures.
* This includes volunteers, unpaid interns
* Those whose work or voluntary activity involves working alongside politicians or party workers

**How will the process of giving evidence work?**

You can agree to take part in the project by completing the consent form at the end of this document and returning it to [testimony@fawcettsociety.org.uk](mailto:cordelia.tuckerosullivan@fawcettsociety.org.uk).

Once you have returned a consent form, a copy will be given to Hogan Lovells. A [female] representative of Hogan Lovells will then contact you to arrange a convenient time to interview you. Interviews will take place either at Hogan Lovells' offices, at another suitable location that is convenient to you, or by telephone, depending on your preference. Taking a statement tends to take between one and two hours. If you would find it difficult to make that much space in your diary, we can take a shorter statement in under an hour.

After the interview, a draft statement will be sent to you for your comments. You are free to amend the statement. Once your amendments have been incorporated, you will be sent a final statement to approve and sign.

You are completely free to decide not to proceed with the process at any time, including once an initial statement has been taken from you or a draft statement has been prepared. You have the right to ask for your personal data to be removed from the project at any time.

**How will statements be used?**

Hogan Lovells and the Fawcett Society will review and analyse all finalised statements to identify broad themes and commonalities between the experiences of women working in the political environment. This process will help to identify aspects of the working environment that give rise to a particular risk of harassment and where problems are arising.

The statements will inform the Fawcett Society report into the cost of the sexual harassment scandal. In particular, the report may contain anonymous extracts from finalised statements to illustrate and amplify certain points. The Fawcett Society may also want to publish testimonies in redacted form, to allow a better understanding of the behaviour women in political life have experienced. Statements would be fully anonymised before publication.

However, we will not make any direct or indirect use of your statement (including referring to it or extracts from it in the report or publishing a redacted version) unless you have given us explicit permission to do so. We will only seek your agreement once you have finalised your statement and we have told you how we would like to use it. Agreeing to participate in this project and providing a statement does not commit you to agreeing to allow us to use your statement further.

**What safeguards will apply to keep evidence confidential?**

Your identity and contact details will be kept in strict confidence and only the Fawcett Society and Hogan Lovells will have access to them.

Completed consent forms and draft and finalised statements will be kept securely at the offices of Hogan Lovells and the Fawcett Society. If information is held on USB drives or on laptop computers it will be encrypted to ensure the material's security.

As noted above, if any use is made of your statement this will only be on a fully anonymised basis and with your express permission to the use made. No names or identifying details of any participant will be published.

It is possible that the Fawcett Society may invite you to participate in further discussions or events associated with this project covering the issues raised by the research. You are under no obligation to participate in any such event. Fawcett will not contact you for this purpose without your permission.

**Further questions**

If you have any further questions about this project or the implications of your involvement in it, please contact Andrew Bazeley andrew.bazeley@fawcettsociety.org.uk (0203 598 6154).

**Data privacy notice**

The Fawcett Society and Hogan Lovells will both be data controllers in relation to your data.

Your data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this information notice with your consent. You can withdraw your consent at any time by emailing Andrew Bazeley at testimony@fawcettsociety.org.uk or the Hogan Lovells lawyer with whom you are dealing.

Your data will not be shared with any other third party and will not be transferred outside the United Kingdom.

It is intended that data will be stored for no more than six months follow following the completion of the project.

You have the right to ask for access for your data and for rectification or erasure of your data. You can also ask for the restriction of processing and to object to processing. To exercise any of these rights please email Andrew Bazeley of the Fawcett Society or the Hogan Lovells lawyer with whom you are dealing. You have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner if you feel that your rights have not been observed.

You are under no obligation to participate in the project or to provide the Fawcett Society or Hogan Lovells with data. No automated decision-making takes place.]

**Consent to participate in the Fawcett Society "The Cost of the Harassment Scandal" research project. Please return to testimony@fawcettsociety.org.uk**

Name ……………………………………..

Role (e.g. MP, parliamentary staff, party worker) ……………………………………..

Contact details:

Address ……………………………………..

……………………………………..

……………………………………..

Email address ……………………………………..

Telephone number ……………………………………..

I would like you to contact me by email/ telephone/ either (delete as appropriate)

The best time to contact me by telephone is [please specify]

…………………………………………………………………………………

I have read the "Reforming Parliament – the Cost of the Harassment Scandal" information note.

I would like to participate in the project by providing evidence to the research project.

I understand that a copy of this form will be given to Hogan Lovells and that a representative of Hogan Lovells will use this information to contact me to arrange a time to provide a statement.

I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, before or after I have provided a statement. If I provide a statement, it will only be used in an anonymous format and with my express permission.

In addition, we may be interested in your ongoing engagement in the project, for instance through attending events, or speaking to members of the media. This would only happen with your express consent and is **not** a requirement to participate in the project overall. If you are happy for Fawcett to contact you for these purposes **please tick this box**

If you would like Fawcett to keep in touch with you about campaigns or activity that flow from this project **please tick this box**

Signed

Dated