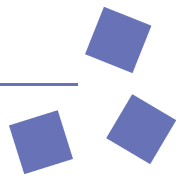


Evaluation of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women Councillors Taskforce

Research report



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Research report

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Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

There are currently around 20,000 local councillors in England of whom about 30% are women. However, less than 1% are BAME women despite the fact that they make up more than 5% of the population. To be representative, the number of BAME women councillors needs to increase more than five-fold to around 1,000.

The BAME Women Councillors' Taskforce was convened in May 2008 to consider practical ways of encouraging BAME women to become local councillors and make councils more representative of the communities they serve. The initiative was a pilot to establish whether such an approach might contribute to addressing underrepresentation.

The Taskforce had cross party representation and fostered a non-adversarial style. Its role was apolitical and it did not set out to provide party political information. Rather, it directed the women to sources of information by providing political contact lists and encouraged them to make contact with local parties in order to find out whose policies had greatest resonance for them.

The practical help provided by the Taskforce working with various delivery partners took three principal forms:

- A programme of outreach events to make BAME women aware of the issue of underrepresentation and open their minds to the possibility of becoming a councillor,
- A programme in which they could shadow and be mentored by a councillor and,
- An online first certificate course in community leadership.

The objectives of the Taskforce are set out in Box 1.

Creative Research was commissioned by the Government Equalities Office to assess the short- and longer-term impacts of the work of the Taskforce as a whole, and by each of these three strands. The aim of the research was to develop understanding about

what has and what has not worked, how and why, in order to help improve future programmes and policy on increasing political representation among BAME women.

Box 1: Aims and objectives of the Taskforce

The high level aims of the Taskforce were:

- To increase the representation of BAME women local councillors
- To increase the number of BAME women put forward as candidates
- To contribute to increasing the number of BAME women in public life.

In order to realise these aims, the Taskforce set itself the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** To improve BAME women's knowledge and awareness of the roles and responsibilities of councillors, how to go about becoming a councillor, and the current under-representation of women in public life
- **Objective 2:** To build confidence and skills among potential candidates
- **Objective 3:** To motivate and encourage BAME women to become candidates
- **Objective 4:** To work to overcome cultural barriers within political parties that prevent BAME women being supported to become councillors
- **Objective 5:** To contribute to reducing stereotyping both within and outside communities through raising awareness of the benefits BAME women bring.

1.2 Research Method

The evaluation was carried out between Summer 2009 and Spring 2010 and used both qualitative and quantitative research techniques including face to face and telephone discussions, and online/ paper-based surveys. Among the surveys was one that set out to track the women's progress between October 2009 and March 2010. The focus of the evaluation was principally the views of the BAME women who were themselves involved in the three strands but it also captured the opinions of some of those who helped to deliver them (the delivery partners) such as Taskforce members, representatives of organisations that worked with the Taskforce (strategic partners), and councillors who were shadowed by, and who mentored the women. The difficulty of gaining responses from the women, councillors and the others involved, meant that

response rates were not as high as hoped. While, for this reason, the quantitative data should be treated with some caution, the very richness of the many different sources of the data means that a coherent picture of responses to the work of the Taskforce can be built up.

1.3 Key Findings

The shadowing and mentoring programme and the community leadership course were still ongoing during the evaluation, but despite the timing constraints, some real benefits were identified for the women who took part in each of the strands of the Taskforce's work. By the end of the work programme, significant outcomes had been achieved.

In terms of meeting the specific objectives of the Taskforce, the three strands of the programme were most successful at imparting knowledge in certain specific areas (objective 1) and in motivating and encouraging the women in their aspirations to be a councillor (objective 3).

- The shadowing and mentoring programme resulted in a statistically significant increase in the women's knowledge about what a councillor does, the skills and qualities needed to be one, the steps to becoming one and how to approach a political party.
- The community leadership course led to a statistically significant improvement in the women's understanding of what a councillor does and how decisions are made by councils.
- Following the outreach events, which were attended by 1,100 or so women, 70% of those providing feedback at the event felt that the event had made it more likely that they would consider becoming a councillor and 75% of the women on the shadowing and mentoring programme who gave feedback also said that they definitely wanted to become a councillor or MP.
- The cross-party non-partisan nature of the Taskforce worked well producing cooperative working and enabling personal alliances to be formed across party lines within the Taskforce.

- Objective 2 of the Taskforce was to build the confidence and skills of the women by making them aware of what they needed to do to be successful in their goal. The different work strands helped strengthen their resolve by confirming that they were well equipped to become a councillor and the shadowing and mentoring scheme provided a credibility that helped them take advantage of opportunities. In terms of building skills, this was most noticeable among some of those on the shadowing and mentoring scheme who were actively involved in 'hands-on' activities such as campaigning and those who attended a session on media training.

Whilst the research was mainly concerned with the impact on the women of the Taskforce's work it also indicated the extent to which it addressed cultural barriers within political parties (objective 4) and stereotyping both within and outside communities (objective 5).

- Some evidence suggested a lack of engagement from local political parties towards some of the women, however the more positive intent of the national parties was seen in their response to women who approached them through workshops, individual meetings and attendance at conference. It was also evident in their statement of commitment and support to the programme as illustrated in the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women Councillors' Taskforce Report published in October 2009
- In relation to the second, stereotyping, a media campaign aimed at stimulating debate about the under-representation of BAME women achieved overwhelmingly positive coverage in print and online articles, radio and TV interviews and features. This particularly focused on the regions where the outreach events were held, and much of the coverage was in community and specialist ethnic media.
- The outreach events were largely (but not exclusively) targeted at BAME women and as a result, they powerfully highlighted the issue of under-representation and the real need for BAME women to come forward. The research also demonstrated how inspiring such a forum could be and how it offered the beginnings of a supportive network of like-minded BAME women. For the

women on the shadowing and mentoring scheme, the support and inspiration derived from their cohort was even more evident.

- Seventeen of the women taking part in the evaluation put themselves forward as candidates in the local (and general) election of May 2010. Fourteen were shortlisted to stand as a councillor or MP and of these, ten were selected. Four went on to be elected as local councillors. There are likely to be others who did not take part in the research or who may stand at the next round of local elections in May 2011.
- Those women who took part in at least one of the activities initiated by the Taskforce and who were elected as councillors in May 2010 might not have been successful so quickly without the structure, guidance and impetus that the Taskforce's work provided. If more of the women are elected in the local elections of 2011, it also seems likely that the Taskforce's work will have significantly contributed to their success.
- The majority of the women who put themselves forward, (some of whom were selected and some elected) had taken part in the shadowing and mentoring scheme. While this might be expected given that these women were carefully selected for their promise as candidates, this demonstrates the valuable role played by such a programme.

1.4 Conclusions

The Taskforce initiated and oversaw delivery of a number of important initiatives to encourage BAME women into public life in a short period with limited resources. Moreover, the endeavour was on an ambitious national scale. It made a great demand on all those involved, and posed a number of challenges throughout. Despite these, it achieved a great deal in terms of the impacts on the women involved, and is likely to continue to do so as they develop and become advocates for participation in public life. In essence, a model based on outreach events, followed by opportunities to shadow and to be mentored, is one that has real potential.

- If such a push for increased representation is to be considered again, then some useful lessons will have been learned from this programme. These lessons

have implications not only for any central government department coordinating a similar programme but for organisations promoting the same goals of fairer representation and delivering programmes, as well as local councils and political parties.

- The importance of **good communications between delivery partner organisations** to harness the valuable input of each and coordinate efforts from an early stage.
- The potential benefits of segmenting and **targeting BAME women** based on their levels of interest in a role in public life, their knowledge and experience; identifying what they need in order to be able to pursue their goal and developing appropriate ways to meet these needs.
- The importance of **identifying and developing ways to support women in pursuing their goal** to become a councillor (or another role in public life), from the beginning of their journey through to involvement in a local political party and beyond. Resources may not be available for women to follow formal programmes but typical pathways and how to access them should be communicated. If women need to organise their own support, for example, then it should be made clear how they should go about this. It is also important that the pathway takes into account the need for the women to feel that their **individual journey is valued and supported**.
- The importance of providing the women with a **single clear summary of the steps** they need to take to progress their ambition and the help and support available. In addition to a printed publication forming the key piece of communication distributed at events, information, guidance and support might be delivered in part electronically, possibly through a **one stop information resource and exchange**.
- Where possible, the **‘cohort effect’ should be harnessed** for positive effect. The cross-party networks of friendships established among women on the shadowing and mentoring programme will hopefully endure and, as the women progress, give rise to networks in political life. Consideration should be given to how the willingness expressed by some in the cohort to

help with local initiatives can be harnessed and ways identified for the women to be involved as part of the pathway for future cohorts. In addition, a forum for the exchange of ideas and support on an online resource could provide the **potential for networking** that the research has shown is so highly valued.

- The success of the shadowing and mentoring programme relies to a large extent on the goodwill and interest of individual councillors who agree to be shadowed and offer their advice and support. The research has shown the difficulties of communicating with councillors but also the importance of **supporting the councillor mentors, managing expectations and taking care in matching the women** with appropriate councillors. An online resource could be one channel for communicating and exchanging ideas for effective shadowing and mentoring.
- The need to join a political party can be a barrier to engagement in political life but for those who wish to do so, the process may not be an easy one. The research has shown the importance of helping women who require it to identify the party whose views resonate most with their own and then approach the local party. Consideration should be given to **how information about the political parties and what they stand for, both nationally and locally, can be passed on to the women and how their first encounters with local party groups can be made welcoming and productive.**
- Finally, it has been noted that the ambitious national scale of the outreach events and shadowing and mentoring scheme made the undertaking all the more challenging. While it was clear that the involvement of a central government department added to the prestige and credibility of the programme, **devolving the planning and running of such a programme to local administrations** would help utilise locally specific knowledge and experience. While the involvement of, and input from, the local level was attempted with this Taskforce, the investment of time and resource required to generate the necessary levels of commitment was greater than could be achieved within this programme. If greater

resources were available for future programmes, these could potentially benefit from more involvement with local administrators (from both local government and the third sector) who could:

- provide greater knowledge of the local population and where imbalances in representation need addressing
- more easily identify and reach local women who might be potential candidates
- help ensure that councillors who agree to be shadowed or to act as mentors are highly motivated and able to draw on the support of each other.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background of the Taskforce

The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Women Councillors' Taskforce (thereafter referred to as the 'Taskforce') was convened in May 2008 to consider practical ways of encouraging BAME women to become local councillors and make councils more representative of the communities they serve. Before the recent elections in 2010, at a national level, only 2 out of 645 MPs and at a local level, less than 1% of councillors in England and none in Wales and Scotland, were BAME women. To be representative of the number of BAME women in the UK, this needed to increase by more than fifteen times in the House of Commons and by more than five times on local councils to around 1,000.¹

The cross-party Taskforce sought to build on the findings of the Councillors Commission² which identified incentives and barriers to under-represented groups to becoming involved in local government. Chaired by Baroness Uddin, the Taskforce was made up of 16 BAME women councillors and former councillors from across Britain. The work of the Taskforce was funded by the Government Equalities Office (GEO) which also provided secretariat support. A number of organisations with complementary agenda aimed at broadening representation were involved as strategic partners and there was engagement with representatives of the political parties and the Office of the Mayor of London in order to harness their support.

The Taskforce's aims and objectives are summarised in Box 1.

2.2 The Programme of Work

There were three strands to the work of the Taskforce aimed at developing the awareness, knowledge, confidence and skills of women and encouraging them to

¹ Fact Sheet compiled by the Government Equalities Office from published data, February 2009

² The Councillors Commission was established in the light of the *Local Government White Paper, Strong and Prosperous Communities* (Communities and Local Government, 2006) to seek ways of encouraging able, qualified and representative people to come forward for election as councillors, to secure public interest and recognition for the work they carry out. The Commission's report, 'Representing the Future', was published in December 2007 by the Department for Communities and Local Government

consider putting themselves forward as local councillors. These are summarised in Box 2.

In addition, a media campaign was developed to support the events programme which yielded coverage in print, online, on the radio and TV.

Box 1: Aims and objectives of the Taskforce

The high level aims of the Taskforce were:

- To increase the representation of BAME women local councillors
- To increase the number of BAME women put forward as candidates
- To contribute to increasing the number of BAME women in public life.

In order to realise these aims, the Taskforce set itself the following objectives:

- **Objective 1:** To improve BAME women's knowledge and awareness of the roles and responsibilities of councillors, how to go about becoming a councillor, and the current under-representation of women in public life
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- **Objective 3:** To motivate and encourage BAME women to become candidates
- **Objective 4:** To work to overcome cultural barriers within political parties that prevent BAME women being supported to become councillors
- **Objective 5:** To contribute to reducing stereotyping both within and outside communities through raising awareness of the benefits BAME women bring.

Box 2: Three key strands of work by the Taskforce

- A programme of sixteen **outreach events** held across Britain between June 2008 and July 2009: these were attended by a total of nearly 1,100 women
- A **shadowing and mentoring programme** delivered by Operation Black Vote for 60 women
- An **online course leading to the First Certificate in community leadership** delivered by the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (Solace Enterprises) for 50 women.

Following the completion of the outreach events, the Taskforce produced its report in October 2009, setting out the impact of their work to date and their recommendations for taking their work forward³. These recommendations fell into four key areas:

- building a better evidence base about the experiences of under-represented groups
- galvanising the main political parties into taking effective action to identify and support potential BAME candidates
- ensuring the work of the Taskforce is sustained as part of a wider work programme
- ensuring that BAME women have access to the information and education they need to put themselves forward as councillors.

In addition, several members of the Taskforce and strategic partners gave evidence to the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation in 2009⁴ and a number of their views were reflected in the conclusions and recommendations of the report published in January 2010⁵. This included the recommendation that all political parties represented at Westminster should publish a statement after the 2010 election setting out the proportion of their Parliamentary party that is female, from a BME⁶ community and/or identifies as a disabled person⁷.

³ Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women Councillors' Taskforce Report, October 2009

⁴ This, the sixth Speaker's Conference, was established in November 2008. The House asked the Conference to look into the reasons why women, members of the black and minority ethnic communities and disabled people are under-represented in the House of Commons, and to recommend ways in which the situation can be improved.

⁵ Final Report Speaker's Conference (on Parliamentary Representation), January 2010, London: The Stationery Office Ltd.

⁶ BME is the acronym used in the report.

⁷ Section 106 of the Equality Act 2010 makes it possible to require registered political parties to publish anonymised data relating to the diversity of their candidate selections at a particular election. The Act contains a power to make regulations determining which political parties and which elections this requirement will apply to, as well as the nature of data and how and when it should be published. Such regulations will need to be the subject of consultation.

3 Methods

3.1 Aims and Objectives

The aims of the research were to assess the short-term and longer-term impacts of the work of the BAME Taskforce, as a whole, and by each of the three strands; the events programme, the shadowing and mentoring programme and the community leadership course. The research sought to develop understanding about what has and what has not worked, how and why, in order to help improve future programmes and policy on increasing political representation among BAME women.

Four main objectives were identified for the research:

1. To identify and examine the **outcomes and effectiveness** of the BAME Taskforce
2. To identify the **strengths** and **limitations** of the BAME Taskforce programme of work
3. To assess the **value** of the Taskforce programme of work, including how to make this agenda sustainable in the longer term
4. To **follow-up and track participants' progress** in getting involved in political and public life.

3.2 Research Method

The programme of research was conducted in two stages to reflect the timing of the three strands of the work that involved BAME women:

- The first stage focused on the evaluation of the outreach events among the women who attended and the findings were included in the report of the Taskforce (see footnote 3, p11)
- The second stage focused on the shadowing and mentoring programme and the community leadership course. It not only gathered the views of the participating women, but also involved discussions with the councillors they were shadowing. This stage also included discussion with others who were involved generally with the work of the Taskforce in order to develop a fuller picture of opinions about its effectiveness.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to determine a benchmark for the awareness, knowledge and attitudes of the women and to measure the impact of the strands of the programme in which they participated. A greater depth of understanding of the reasons for their views was also sought. The various research elements are summarised in Table 1 and the response rates to the two waves of the tracking survey are provided in Table 2. More details about the methods, the nature and size of the samples and response rates can be found in the Appendices (see section A.1) along with the results of the two waves of the tracking survey (see section A.2).

3.3 Limitations of the Research

This research sought to collect quantitative data to provide a degree of robustness and measurement, and to allow us to investigate whether the shadowing and mentoring programme and the community leadership course had a significant impact on the women. Indeed, one of the reasons for including in the tracking study those women who had attended an outreach event but who had not taken part in either of these schemes was so that they could provide a benchmark against which to measure the progress of the women on the two programmes. Comparisons between the women on the councillor mentoring/shadowing scheme and those on the community leadership course were also planned.

There were various challenges involved in getting in touch with women who had attended the events, and those on the shadowing and community leadership schemes, as well as councillors. In the event, the response rates were lower than anticipated (see Table 2 and section A.1). Indeed, a common theme throughout this work has been the difficulty of getting in touch with not only the women themselves but also the councillors. Qualitative feedback from both audiences also indicates that communication has sometimes been a problem not just for the evaluation but also for the operation of the shadowing and mentoring programme and community leadership scheme. Communications between the various parties involved - delivery partners, the women and the councillors have not always worked smoothly (see 6.3.3, 6.4 and 7.2). This is returned to at 4.4.4.

Much of the communication has been electronic and this suggests that this should not be relied on as the principal method for future initiatives. It is all too easy for an email to either be overlooked in an already full inbox or to be filtered out as spam. Bounce-

backs to emails suggest that addresses may be changed. Where the women do not have access to email at work and are reliant on technology at home, problems with this have caused difficulties for a few.

Table 1: Summary of research activities

Stage 1 Research: to evaluate the outreach event programme	
Observation of two events and discussions with attendees before and after	July 2009
Analysis and synthesis of 569 paper-based feedback forms from each event	August 2009
Four focus groups with 23 women who attended one of five events	September 2009
Stage 2 Research: to evaluate the shadowing/mentoring programme and the community leadership course	
Tracking survey in two waves among women attending events and participants in programme and course. Wave 1 was conducted before the two schemes had started; 119 replies were received and analysed Wave 2 was conducted when the participants had either completed the programme/course or were shortly due to do so; 58 replies were received and analysed	October 2009 and March 2010
9 telephone interviews with women on the shadowing /mentoring programme	February-March 2010
4 telephone interviews with women on the community leadership course	February-March 2010
4 telephone interviews with councillors supporting the shadowing/mentoring programme; one provided feedback by email. Councillors were also invited to take part in a short online survey however, the response to this was extremely low (n=6)	March 2010
To evaluate the work of the Taskforce	
Mix of 10 face to face and telephone interviews with 'delivery partners' - Taskforce members, strategic partners, political contacts, an event facilitator and GEO staff members	October 2009-January 2010

The samples are largely self-selecting (the respondents have chosen whether or not they participated) and this introduces a potential response bias. While the research may

have drawn mainly on the views of the women with the greatest interest in pursuing a role in public life, this does not necessarily mean that the findings are more positively skewed than might otherwise have been the case. For example, the women attending the focus group discussions had a considerable amount of constructive criticism to offer.

Table 2: Response rates to the two waves of the survey

		Shadowing and Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only	Total
Wave 1	invites sent	60	50	1171	1281
	replies received	37	28	54	119
	response rate	62%	56%	5%	9%
Wave 2	invites sent	60	50	54	164
	replies received	21	26	11	58
	response rate	35%	52%	20%	35%

3.4 Interpreting the Findings

In terms of the quantitative data, the small base sizes mean it is not possible to make a comprehensive set of statistical comparisons. However, the bases are big enough to allow some statistical comparisons of responses to pre-coded questions, although similar response categories may have been collapsed to ensure sufficiently large cell sizes. In these situations, a non-parametric statistic (chi squared test) has been used. The term **significant** is used to describe findings that are **statistically significant** at the 95% confidence level.

Where there are smaller sub-groups (such as the proportion of women on the community leadership programme who had completed the course), and where there are open ended questions, the data have been treated qualitatively; the range of answers received and the main themes have been reported on. Consistencies have also been explored between the quantitative and qualitative data sets.

A summary of the main quantitative findings is provided in A.2. The data are mainly presented in the form of raw numbers rather than percentages as the latter conceals the small numbers involved.

Overall, the findings need to be treated carefully. They do not provide a robust level of measurement; however, they do provide a rich and detailed qualitative assessment of the outcomes of the work of the Taskforce.

3.5 Use of Quotations

The report is illustrated with quotations extracted from interviews and in some cases, written responses. In attributing each quotation, the part of the research and the audience it came from are indicated. With respect to the delivery partner interviews (those with Taskforce members, strategic partners, political contacts, an event facilitator and GEO staff members), comments have not been attributed to different types of delivery partner as the numbers within each were so small; instead, they have been grouped under 'delivery partner'.

3.6 Structure of the Report

The next section draws together our key findings from across the research programme. Sections 5-7 provide an overview of the research findings relating specifically to each of the strands of the Taskforce's work: the events, the shadowing and mentoring scheme and the community leadership course, respectively. Please note, however that much additional detail of the research findings has already been reported in the Taskforce's report (chapter 4 and appendix 5; see footnote 3, p11) and is not reproduced here.

4 Key Findings

Box 3: Headline impacts

- The outreach events were largely (but not exclusively) targeted at BAME women and powerfully highlighted the issue of under-representation and the real need for BAME women to come forward. The research demonstrated how inspiring such a forum could be and how it offered the beginnings of a supportive network of like-minded women. This was even more evident for women on the shadowing and mentoring scheme.
- The cross-party non-partisan nature of the Taskforce produced cooperative working and facilitated productive alliances across party lines within the Taskforce
- 70% of the women giving feedback after an event reported that they were now more likely to consider becoming a councillor and three-quarters of those taking part in the shadowing and mentoring programme wished to become a councillor.
- The shadowing and mentoring programme resulted in a statistically significant increase in the women's knowledge about what a councillor does, the skills and qualities needed to be one, the steps to becoming one and how to approach a political party.
- The community leadership course led to a statistically significant improvement in the women's understanding of what a councillor does and how decisions are made by councils.
- Seventeen of the women taking part in the evaluation put themselves forward as candidates in the local (and general) election of May 2010. Fourteen were shortlisted to stand as a councillor or MP and of these, ten were selected. Four went on to be elected as local councillors. There are likely to be others who did not take part in the research or who may stand at the next round of local elections in May 2011. Those women who took part in at least one of the activities initiated by the Taskforce and who were elected as councillors in May 2010 might not have been successful so quickly without the structure, guidance and impetus that the Taskforce's work provided. If more of the women are elected in the local elections of 2011, it also seems likely that the Taskforce's work will have contributed to their success.
- The Taskforce instigated a media campaign aimed at stimulating debate about the under-representation of BAME women and tackling stereotyping both within and outside their communities. This achieved overwhelmingly positive coverage in print and online articles, radio and TV interviews and features.
- With respect to the Taskforce's objective to work to overcome cultural barriers within political parties that prevent BAME women being supported to become councillors, while there was some evidence of a lack of welcome from local political parties towards some of the women, the more positive intent of the national parties was seen in their response to women who approached them through workshops, individual meetings and attendance at conference.

4.1 Introduction

There are a number of challenges in evaluating the impact of the Taskforce at this time. The time frame originally set for achievement of the aims of the BAME Women Councillors Taskforce was 2011⁸ so that this research only reports progress against these aims to date. Moreover, in evaluating progress, we face difficulties in measuring changes in the number of BAME women putting themselves forward to stand as local councillors or taking roles in public life owing to the lack of benchmark data on this⁹. As and when increases are achieved, it will be difficult to attribute this to the work of the Taskforce alone given that a number of other organisations are involved in working towards wider representation and it is not certain how the women would have fared without participation in the Taskforce's work.

However, despite the timing constraints on the research and the need to focus on short-term effects, we have been able to identify some real benefits for the women who took part in the various activities put in place by the Taskforce. A summary of the headline impacts is provided in Box 3.

This section of the report sets out the overarching findings from the research. It includes comments made by the 'delivery partners' involved in the delivery of the programme.

⁸ The next bi-annual National Census of Local Authority Councillors which provides the most comprehensive and timely overview of local government representation and how this has changed over time in England will be published in January 2011 for 2010.

⁹ One of the recommendations of the Taskforce is that the government and LGA should collect better, more regular and more up to date data on the diversity of both local candidates and elected councillors. While baseline data is available for BAME women **elected** as councillors (0.9% in 2006 and 0.8% in 2008 according to the National Census of Local Authority Councillors), data is not available for the proportion of BAME women out of all candidates putting themselves forward, being shortlisted or being selected to stand.

4.2 Outcomes

Although five objectives were set down for the Taskforce's work (see Box 1), this evaluation focused on the following three objectives:

Objective 1: To improve BAME women's knowledge and awareness of the roles and responsibilities of councillors, how to go about becoming a councillor, and the current under-representation of women in public life

Across the three strands of the programme for engaging with BAME women, the research has shown that **women felt they had gained in knowledge**. The events very effectively brought home to attendees the under-representation of BAME women in public life and provided some initial information about what it meant to be a councillor and how to become one (see 5.5). The shadowing and mentoring programme resulted in a statistically significant increase in the women's knowledge about what a councillor does, the skills and qualities needed to be one, the steps to becoming one and how to approach a political party, as evidenced by their self-rated levels of understanding of these issues (see 6.3.1 and A.2.4). In the same way, the community leadership course also led to a statistically significant improvement in the women's understanding of what a councillor does and how decisions are made by councils (see 7.4.1 and A.2.4).

While those involved reported that each strand was helpful, there was also some indication that women did not feel that they were given all the information they needed at the time when it might have proven most useful and that information could have been delivered in a more succinct and digestible manner. For example, many of the women attending the outreach events¹⁰ left feeling that what they really needed at that point was a simple step by step summary of what they needed to do to become a councillor rather than the large quantity of information that was available¹¹ (see 5.4 and 5.6). Some of those accepted onto the shadowing and mentoring programme (some of whom had not attended an event) embarked on this without a clear idea of what they needed to do to become a councillor to the extent that some of the councillors they were

¹⁰ Based on interviews after two of the events and follow-up focus groups

¹¹ Material was available on the tables in the council chamber, in carrier bags on the seating and at a central 'marketplace' where attendees could pick up more literature. This included statistical data and publications about representation, biographies of Taskforce members and information about the strategic partners, print-outs of slide presentations, a list of useful political contacts and more besides.

shadowing were surprised by their lack of awareness. This is further explored below (6.3.3 and 6.4).

Objective 2: To build confidence and skills among potential candidates

This objective reflects the identification by the Councillors Commission of a lack of confidence among young people, women and those from minority ethnic communities as a possible deterrent to standing for office¹². The Taskforce did not set out to provide BAME women with the confidence and skills to become councillors but rather to help their development by making the women aware of what they needed to do to be successful in their goal. Nevertheless, there was some indication that the work of the Taskforce helped increase the women's confidence in certain respects.

A number of women reported that they had gained confirmation from the events (see 5.5) and the shadowing and mentoring that they possessed the required qualities to be a councillor and they were also very appreciative of the strength gained from the support they gave each other. For some, the 'stamp of approval' given by acceptance on to the shadowing and mentoring scheme increased their confidence to seek out opportunities, and to accept those that were presented to them (see 6.3.3).

However, the idea of increasing basic confidence levels did not apply to many of the women who attended the events and certainly those who were selected for the shadowing and mentoring scheme were already confident individuals, often with a great deal of relevant experience. Some prickled at the idea that they needed their confidence boosting and felt a little patronised by this attitude. Indeed, some of the delivery partners also commented that the assumption that BAME women need their confidence enhancing was not necessarily correct (see 4.3.1).

In terms of the development of their skills, those who were involved in the shadowing and mentoring and who had really thrown themselves into it seemed to have gained much from 'hands-on' involvement in activities such as canvassing and campaigning,

¹² Page 19, 'Representing the Future', Report of the Councillors Commission

and many women singled out the national leadership seminar¹³ for what they had learned about media skills (see 6.3.3).

Objective 3: To motivate and encourage BAME women to become candidates

All the strands of the programme were felt to be motivating and encouraging. The outreach events proved particularly inspiring for many and helped create a sense of entitlement and empowerment and a drive to press for greater representation. 70% of the 452 women who gave feedback reported that the event they attended had made it more likely that they would consider becoming a councillor (see 5.5).

The shadowing and mentoring programme offered a more grounded experience based on the day-to-day reality of being a councillor and encouraged many participants to believe that they had the qualities and skills needed. As a result of participating in the scheme, three-quarters of those taking part in the evaluation (15 out of 20 women) felt that they wished to pursue a goal to become a councillor and a further 20% (n=4) were still in the process of making up their mind (see 6.3.4 and A.2.6).

The community leadership course, by its very nature, had a less dramatic impact but provided many women with background information that encouraged them to move forward with their goals. 54% of the women on the course (n=13) were planning on becoming a councillor/MP at the time of the wave 2 survey; 33% (n=8) were still making up their minds and the remaining three women had decided it was not for them (see 7.4.3 and A.2.6).

4.3 Strengths and Challenges

The Taskforce working with its delivery partners achieved a great deal in a short timescale with limited resources in the face of some major difficulties. The Taskforce Chair and her team of Taskforce members, supported by a core of staff from the Government Equalities Office in a secretariat role and with little outside help, organised and staged sixteen outreach events around the UK; the first was held just a few weeks

¹³ The national leadership seminar was organised by Operation Black Vote as part of the shadowing and mentoring programme at the end of January 2010. It provided some media training (media interviewing, managing the media and use of new media) and presentations by representatives of the main parties and the Independent Group Office of the LGA on the process of being elected.

after the Taskforce sat for the first time. It also set up the delivery of the shadowing and mentoring programme which was run by Operation Black Vote (OBV) and the community leadership course by Solace Enterprises. Importantly, it produced recommendations for taking the work of the Taskforce forward through the bodies that are already in place, and in the best position to deliver them. It also contributed positively to the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation¹⁴.

Several of the delivery partners that were interviewed (a mix of Taskforce members, strategic partners and political contacts) applauded the seriousness of the endeavour that was signalled by the quality of the Taskforce and the fact that the programme was initiated by a high-profile minister within a central government department. They also specifically praised the delivery of the outreach events.

"They've run a fantastic series of events that have had really good attendances and have produced a thousand women, some of whom would have decided this is not for them, and some of whom would have decided to take it further. That is a great achievement. Those events are not easy to run and they're very difficult to raise audiences for, I do think that is a great achievement, and I don't think anyone else could have done it." (Delivery partner)

The cross-party non-partisan nature of the Taskforce was felt to work well. It not only produced cooperative working but enabled personal alliances to be formed across party lines within the Taskforce (see 4.3.2 and 4.4.6 also). Given that many of the women attracted to the events were not politically knowledgeable and/or had a somewhat negative view of politics, this ethos was particularly appropriate.

Our interviews with the delivery partners revealed some issues and challenges associated with the programme which are summarised below.

4.3.1 The issues addressed

The work of the Taskforce was directed at BAME women themselves and addressed the barrier identified in the Councillors Commission report of a lack of confidence and skills to enter politics rather than the institutional barriers (also identified in the report) that deter women from putting themselves forward or prevent them being successful if they do. Several of the delivery partners argued that factors such as institutional sexism

¹⁴ See 2.2 footnote 4, page 11

and racism are more important in restricting women's engagement and the personal experiences of some Taskforce members who have been unable to progress on the national political scene despite their years of local experience were seen as attesting to such barriers. It was also noted that many of the women at the events had been involved in their communities for years and yet had not been encouraged or found roles in public life.

“One or two of the events I went to, there was quite a lot of statements from the participants about ‘same old, same old, same old faces’. Now, some of these people have been engaged and active as women’s activists for 10-20 years... I was really surprised to have them in the audience and they weren’t yet councillors or school governors or something else, and that did surprise me.”
(Delivery partner)

This led some delivery partners to suggest that one possible limitation of the Taskforce's work was that it did not attempt to make any inroads into such deep-rooted barriers.

“Well that’s the kind of rationale that’s behind it, implicitly if you pull it out, there’s not enough ethnic minority women involved in politics – why? We need to tell them what the job is about, we need to build their confidence and we need to let them know they have the skills. Well actually, who says they don’t have confidence, who says they don’t have the skills and who says it’s that hard to find out what the job involves? That may not be the main reason why women aren’t involved in politics ... I would argue there’s a huge number of other issues going on, like institutional sexism, institutional racism that is a bar... it’s really about coming back to what are the systematic barriers that are operating and that exist. That may include skills of course, but I think out of a population of 5.2 million or something ethnic minority women, we must be able to find some that have skills and knowledge already there.” (Delivery partner)

“My basic approach always, is the problem is not the women, it’s the system. All of these projects, of which this is just one, tend to start with, ‘let’s try and change women, make them more confident, less ignorant, make them whatever it is you want to make them’, on the assumption they’ll fit into the system. My starting point is that there is something fundamentally wrong with the system, so let’s try and change that. That’s very difficult for civil servants to do, or anything emanating from government to do, and it’s also difficult for political parties.”
(Delivery partner)

There was however (as the second quote acknowledges), some understanding of the reasons for this, including the time that it would take to unravel such fundamental issues and the difficulty of doing this within a political timetable that meant that something had to be achieved within 18 months or so. There was a call from some delivery partners for longer term strategic thinking and working with and through others already committed to the cause.

“I think it’s just a case of it’s a lot harder to work on and if you’re trying to get a result, a quick result, starting to unpick, unravel and develop programmes to address some of the really embedded problems is a lot harder. It takes an involvement, a commitment that, it’s more than just an eighteen month programme. But I think the issues are out there, I think people are familiar with it, I think there’s enough organisations that are talking about it. The challenge is probably ‘what the heck do we do and how do we do it’. I think that’s the challenge.” (Delivery partner)

“My starting point, if we were doing it all over again, would be to sit down with politicians before they even start and say ‘here’s what’s possible and here’s what’s not’.” (Delivery partner)

The point was made that after the recent (2010) and next year’s (2011) elections, there will be a long gap (for many councils) before women will have an opportunity to put themselves forward again. This time needs to be used profitably to build the involvement of BAME women in the political process perhaps by using the Speaker’s Conference recommendations on representation in Parliament as a vehicle to introduce measures to address this imbalance.

4.3.2 Handling the political dimension

The Taskforce was set up to have cross party representation and to be non-adversarial in style and as noted at 4.3, the delivery partners felt this was one of its strengths. Taskforce members valued the non-partisan atmosphere in which they worked together. The Taskforce did not see it as its role to provide information about what each of the political parties stands for but instead to provide the women with the information (in the form of a political contacts list at the outreach events) to enable them to make contact with local parties and find out whose policies had greatest resonance for them. The Taskforce also facilitated communications between the political parties and the women by forwarding information about events and other matters.

Feedback from some of the delivery partners and the women themselves suggests that the political dimension might have been handled more productively to help the women in deciding about or confirming their allegiances. Some delivery partners expressed the view that it was both artificial and unhelpful to the women not to make political information more readily available since many of the women were likely to have a negative view of the political system and politicians, and to be uninformed. It was suggested by a few (delivery partners and a couple of the women on the shadowing and mentoring programme) that there was an inherent appeal in standing as an independent

in order to stay aloof from politics but this needed to be balanced against the disadvantages of being 'on your own' (see 6.3.1). They felt that the disadvantages should be communicated very clearly.¹⁵ It was suggested that one of the ways of doing so was to bring home to the women what the parties stand for. Some of the delivery partner suggestions have been included below (4.4.8) for how women might be encouraged to become more informed about the political parties.

Some delivery partners felt that another consequence of the non-partisan stance was that it was not sufficiently emphasised to the women in the events that politics is the way that things get changed and that anyone wanting to be a councillor needs to have some idea of the sort of society they would like to see. One of the strategic partners also suggested that, because there was less emphasis in the information provided on the importance of becoming involved in local politics and putting yourself forward for selection for a political position, the role of councillor could be interpreted more as being a job for which one applied.

"I think the big missing element in all of this is political education. Not in a party political way, but in a way that says actually 'this is about what you believe, and what sort of society you want to see'. It's not just a job you go into because you've got skills and ability and all the rest of it. You need all of those things, but underpinning that, whichever party you join, you need some kind of political commitment, some kind of vision, of what it is you want to leave behind you when you finish." (Delivery partner)

"It's not just a job you go into because you've got skills and ability and all the rest of it. You need all of those things, but underpinning that, whichever party you join, you need some kind of political commitment, some kind of vision, of what it is you want to leave behind you when you finish." (Delivery partner)

4.4 Value and Sustainability

The research has shown that the Taskforce's work has value in several respects, both tangible and intangible. Firstly, it provided a potent signal of the seriousness with which the underrepresentation of BAME women was taken; the involvement of a central government department and the national political parties conveyed to the women that

¹⁵ Feedback indicates that at the later outreach events, the advantages and disadvantages of standing as an independent were communicated more strongly than at some of the earlier sessions.

their engagement was being actively sought in order to meet a real need. The research demonstrated that the work helped the women in various ways (see 5.5, 5.7, 6.3 and 7.4); for some it planted or possibly nurtured the seed of an idea of participation in political life. For others, it helped them progress their ambitions in a more concrete way, and for a few, it delivered the final push to 'go for it', enabling them to achieve their goal more quickly. Other women were helped to reach the decision that such a role was actually not for them, either at all or at least for now, while it motivated some to look into other ways that they could participate in public life.

It might be argued that a programme directed specifically at BAME women is not necessary and that all women would benefit from it. However, this research strongly suggests there is real value in focusing on BAME women particularly during the early engagement process. The message was conveyed all the more powerfully in events attended largely by BAME women, because the unfairness of their underrepresentation was starkly evident in the context of so many talented women. It also demonstrated how inspiring such a forum could be and how it offered the beginnings of a supportive network of like-minded women.

While the programme has delivered some notable successes and impacts, a number of learning points for taking the work forward and for conducting similar programmes in the future are also presented. These have implications not only for any central government department coordinating a similar programme but for local authorities and organisations promoting the same goals of fairer representation and delivering programmes, as well as local councils and political parties.

4.4.1 Harnessing the input of the delivery partners

Clearly, the strategic partners and political contacts are actively involved, and have a role to play, in encouraging and facilitating the entry of BAME women into political life. Indeed, some of them were already working on initiatives that overlapped with the work of the Taskforce. While they were involved with the Taskforce, the view was expressed by some that they might have been able to make more of an input if there had been

more direct working together from an early stage¹⁶. In taking the agenda forward, there could be closer strategic and tactical working between the various parties in order to build on what each is doing and thereby achieve maximum effect. Suggestions as to how this might be achieved include:

- consulting with strategic partners at an early stage to ensure they have the opportunity to influence strategy
- building in time to allow for a strategic overview of the various initiatives already planned and underway to ensure that, as far as possible, these work to mutual benefit in taking the agenda forward
- taking greater advantage of meetings being open, and encouraging further the invitation of all delivery partners
- where it is necessary to hold parallel meetings because of the numbers involved, then two or more members of each grouping could be selected to sit on the other 'committee' and attend their meetings. In this way, there should be greater consistency of presence and increased cross-group working.

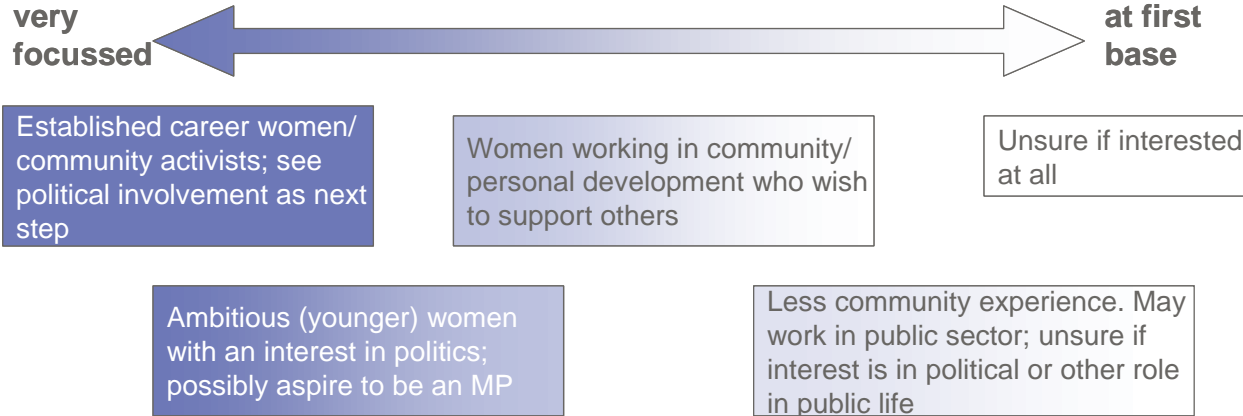
4.4.2 Developing a programme to meet the needs of different women

The research suggests much can be learned from this programme about identifying what it is one is trying to achieve and therefore the best way of doing this. The events set out to involve as many BAME women as possible, and attracted a large number and a broad range of women (nearly 1,100); from those with a latent interest in entering public life to those who had clearly set themselves this goal and were already working towards it (see 5.2, 5.3).

Figure 1 provides some examples of the variety of women who attended the outreach events in terms of how ready they were to become more actively involved in public life. This diversity highlights the challenges that were faced in meeting such a variety of needs. It also provides important context to the achievements of the programme.

¹⁶ Due to the numbers involved, separate meetings were held with the Taskforce members and strategic partners although on the same day and chaired by the Taskforce Chair. Each meeting was open to observers.

Figure 1: A possible segmentation of the women attending the outreach events



The events were intended to raise awareness of the underrepresentation of BAME women in public life and did this effectively. They also succeeded in bringing together and presenting a great deal of information about underrepresentation and how the women might personally tackle this. While this broad brush approach which was necessary because of limited time and resources therefore worked well, consideration might be given to whether a more targeted approach might be more productive if time and resources allow this. For example, a different type of event and marketing approach might be considered for those who already know they wish to enter the political arena compared to those who know very little about what options might be open to them and whether they might have the relevant qualities.

A core part of the audience at the events were women who were already engaged in the community in a voluntary role or as part of a career in the public sector (see 5.2). Among them were some of those who were most focused on a larger public role. Some of these women had already tried to achieve positions in public life but had been unsuccessful. Particular effort had been made by those organising the events to identify, contact and bring in such women and justifiably - they have a better sense of what they wish to achieve and the experience of working with and through people that equips them to be a councillor (indeed, these were criteria used to select women for the shadowing and mentoring). What they may lack however, is the inclination to engage with the political system, the political knowledge and skills to do so, and possibly, the credibility that comes from external acknowledgement of their potential. This where the programme can add value.

*“I think women are quite focussed about what they want to do, what they think they can affect. But they don’t necessarily see politics as the route for doing that so you find very large numbers of women who would be fantastic in public life, but they don’t see that as the route for doing it, and part of that is, in their minds, there is a disconnect between political parties and aspiration, social change.”
(Delivery partner)*

“This isn’t just about women in office, in political office. This is about women in public life. There are a whole host of boards that make key decisions about how we spend public money that are bereft of representation, you know, and I just think that we need to be able to extend how that landscape changes. And I know women who are really, you know, so keen to want to be able to do this. I know women that want to go on to PCT boards, in police authorities, but they don’t know how to go about it. The outreach demonstrated to me that there’s lots of women out there from minority backgrounds, and from, indeed, you know, the host nation, who are really very keen to do this, but really don’t know. And we end up with the same suspects on the same boards.” (Delivery partner)

These women were often successfully contacted via the networks to which they belong. While this might indeed be an excellent way of doing this, especially when running the first of the events, the feedback provided by some of the attendees at the events, in the event feedback forms and in the focus groups, suggested it risks being fairly hit and miss. After attending the event some of the women mentioned other women whom they knew of who might have been interested but who were unaware of the event. While it is gratifying that attendees saw the wider value of the events, this also suggests that similar future work programmes may benefit from either a longer and established operating period, to allow the informal generation of interest from further relevant women or greater targeting of the initial attendees. The targeting could be achieved through early work with local organisations with a more detailed knowledge of the local area and potential audiences, to ensure the key people in that area are included.

Moreover, based on the comments of a number of these more focused women, a large scale event may not be the best way of meeting their needs since they are often looking for specific information about their next steps. A smaller, more personal forum combining fewer presentations with the opportunity for an exchange of views and questions to establish interest and discuss the way forward, was suggested by a number of women as a potentially more productive approach.

In contrast, the women who are at first base in their aspirations for a role in public life, may require an entirely different approach and may present different challenges in engagement. Firstly, they might not be identifiable from databases or personal contacts and may need to be reached out to in their communities. One of the strategic partners,

for example, spoke of going out and engaging women in the places where they congregated. Certainly, a media strategy aimed at reaching this group would need to be far more locally focused or it might be necessary to incentivise grassroots organisations to help reach such women. For this target audience, it might be more appropriate to organise and market smaller scale events in community venues and set out the range of roles in public life that are open to them.

Clearly, such approaches can be cost and resource intensive and strategic decisions will need to be taken about where the best value will be achieved – from more focussed work with women with identifiable drive and appetite for public life, or a more general awareness campaign to inspire women to consider this, perhaps for the first time.

4.4.3 Establishing pathways to greater involvement in public life

Undoubtedly, those who choose to enter the political arena require focus and tenacity to drive them to achieve the things they believe in and a few of the women whose path through the shadowing and mentoring scheme had not been smooth, acknowledged that anyone wanting to be a councillor had, to an extent, find their own way (see 6.3.3). However, this research has shown that if BAME women (and probably any underrepresented group) are **invited** to put themselves forward; they will need some support and indeed, will have some expectation, that there is a path leading to their goal that they could usefully follow.

Perceptions of the three strands of the programme demonstrated that there was an expectation that there would be a staged process that women might follow in pursuing their ambition. While there might have been follow-up activities (such as the shadowing and mentoring scheme after the outreach events, shadowing after completion of the community leadership course), there was sometimes a gap in time before these were made known to the women which meant they did not have an overview of the path they might take and were therefore sometimes left wondering – what next?

On the basis of this feedback, it would suggest that if a concerted attempt is to be made to bring BAME women into public life, then thought needs to be given to the pathway(s) that they might follow – what are the typical (and less typical) ways of gaining appointment or selection, what is available to support them and what are the things that the women might need to organise or find out themselves? This is consistent with one

of the Taskforce's recommendations¹⁷ and several of the recommendations in the Speaker's Conference report also touch on educating citizens about the political system and the routes to political office¹⁸.

Communication of the pathway might include advice about the experience the women need to gain through involvement in community based organisations or community development roles, guidance on how they qualify and/or apply for specific positions in public life, some information about the different ways in which local political parties select candidates to stand as councillors. The options for accessing shadowing and mentoring opportunities might be mapped out; the women could be made aware of any centrally organised schemes or it might be suggested they approach the political party contacts or local councillors directly. They might be told about organisations such as OBV and London Councils who might also offer useful programmes or about local organisations that could offer support or signpost where it might be found.¹⁹ Essentially, if the women need to act on their own initiative and put things in place themselves, then they need to be told how to set about this.

4.4.4 Accessing guidance and support

It is important that information about the steps to be taken by women who are interested in a role in public life should be communicated clearly and succinctly in a single source rather than presenting them with lots of information and expecting them to follow up multiple references (see 5.5). While this should certainly be provided in printed form (it could have been the key piece of information for women leaving the events), consideration should also be given to whether it might also be delivered electronically.

A one-stop online resource might be usefully developed as an information tool and as an interactive forum for networking, asking questions and discussing issues. It was

¹⁷ One of the key recommendations of the Taskforce is that the Equality and Human Rights Commission should map routes into national politics for different groups including assessment of the extent to which experience in local government provides a stepping stone to being an MP.

¹⁸ For example, greater public education on how to become an electoral candidate and monitoring and publication of information on routes by which future MPs enter Parliament.

¹⁹ This is congruent with the Taskforce's recommendation that 'The government should consider what support is available to help third sector organisations develop resources and initiatives to engage BAME women and support those wanting to participate in public life, identify where the gaps are and raise awareness of opportunities to access support as appropriate.'

mentioned that even those elected as councillors may have gaps in their knowledge so that such a resource could be designed for all stages of the pathway. The Local Government Improvement and Development (LGID) website provides some information about widening participation (as well as a discussion forum for councillors) but this is not aimed at those who are at the beginning of their journey. Neither the very informative London Councils website, nor those belonging to the main political parties offer broad ranging information and an interactive element. Indeed, one of recommendations of the Taskforce is along similar lines²⁰ and the research shows the appetite for and the potential benefits of such a resource. Development of this should be by one or more delivery partners with experience in this field such as the LGA, LGID and the Leadership Centre for Local Government.

4.4.5 Providing ongoing individual support

In thinking about pathways, consideration should also be given to how women are supported individually along the way, and the variety of support that may be required. The evaluation of the shadowing and mentoring programme and the community leadership course showed in a few cases that women had not completed or had a less positive experience as a result of not feeling sufficiently supported in their efforts. This was either from a perceived lack of communication from the organisations delivering the schemes, or relationships with councillors with whom they had been partnered that were not as productive as they would have liked (see 6.3.3, 6.4 and 7.2). By contrast, others thrived in the programme because of the support they received (see 6.3.3).

As there are a variety of experiences of the support provided it is difficult to draw a consistent picture of where this could be improved moving forward. However, it is clearly important to think about how support can be delivered to individuals on an ongoing basis, and ideally, ensure that individuals get an opportunity to shape how they feel they can be supported. Access to a mentor or an online resource were but two examples suggested by the research. The point was also made that in many local authorities, there will be a long gap after the 2011 elections and that efforts will be

²⁰ This recommendation states that 'The LGA, IDeA* and Leadership Centre for Local Government should develop a new national 'one-stop shop' website as a resource for those who are interested in becoming involved in local democracy and wider civic participation.' *Note IDeA are now LGID

needed to ensure that BAME women, who have become engaged in their local party, find it a sufficiently rewarding experience in that time to want to continue.

4.4.6 Harnessing the 'cohort effect'

The women, particularly those taking part in the shadowing and mentoring programme, have very much appreciated the support they have derived from their peers, and it is clear that many strong relationships have been established that are likely to endure (see 6.5). These will hopefully help sustain the women as they progress, if not as councillors, then in other roles in public or community life. They may also spread to become the kind of networks that other mainstream groups have built in politics and perhaps women in this cohort can go on to inspire and act as role models for other BAME women (and other women) who follow. Indeed, several women attending the events and/or taking part in the shadowing and mentoring scheme were mindful of the advantage they had been given and expressed a desire to take on a role in which they could roll out similar programmes in their local area. In terms of the sustainability of the programme, the interest, experience and local knowledge of such women might be harnessed, for example in helping to organise local events/ schemes or in acting as mentors.

Moreover, if among the deterrents for those thinking of standing is the culture of local government and over-confrontational style of discourse²¹, then the opportunity for cooperation and support across the party divide may help balance this. Indeed, for members of the Taskforce, a positive outcome of their work was the formation of good relationships with women of different political persuasions who offered mutual support in what they came to see as a 'safe zone'.

"The wonderful thing I have to say about the Taskforce is, after the first official meeting that we had, we all got to know each other. After that initial uncomfortableness, party politics never came into it, it just never came into it. What came into it were our experiences, the pros and cons of what we were doing, and the reaction we had from other people when we first started out on this whole thing and it was quite negative... We're all in the same boat, and we're all trying to achieve similar sort of things, and by supporting each other, it's possible that we can do that. And that's one of the best things I got out of it was that support." (Delivery partner)

²¹ Page 17 'Representing the Future' Report of the Councillors Commission

In taking the agenda forward, if an online resource can be developed, this could usefully incorporate a forum for the exchange of ideas and support and provide the potential for networking that the research has shown is so highly valued.

4.4.7 Supporting the vital role of the councillor shadows and mentors

The small number of councillors (n=11) who were involved in the research who had been shadowed or acted as mentors were, for the most part, very willing to help with the programme and prepared to do so again (see 6.4). They were sometimes concerned however about whether they were doing the right things and fulfilling the requirements of the programme or whether there might be other things that they could or should be helping with. There was also some feedback from a few of the women shadows that their expectations with respect to 'their' councillor had not been met.

The goodwill and assistance of councillors who are very busy individuals is vital to this and any continuing programme, and great care should be taken in matching women with appropriate councillors, ensuring that all parties know what is expected of them and feel supported in delivering it. The management of this process is not a small undertaking and this should be recognised in assigning resources to formal shadowing and mentoring programmes. A one-stop information resource could be one channel for communicating and exchanging ideas for effective shadowing.

4.4.8 Developing political knowledge

The research has demonstrated the low levels of awareness among some of the women of what the different parties stand for (although this may have improved since the recent televised debates with the political leaders in the lead up to the May 2010 general election). It has also shown that having to join a political party can be one of the barriers to greater engagement. The point was also made by a couple of the delivery partners that for all the parties, what happens locally is very different to what happens at the national level and the women need to be aware of this.

The women on the programme were given detailed information of national and local political contacts, however some still needed more confidence to approach political parties and others had difficulty deciding which to approach (see 5.7). This suggests that greater assistance may be needed to help them make that decision; this may need

to take different forms for different women, and any information or support provided would need to relate to both national and local politics.

Several of the delivery partners felt that it should have been possible to have introduced some element of political information into the events. This might be achieved by having short presentations available for those interested by each of the local parties represented on the council. Women taking part in shadowing schemes who are uncertain about where their political allegiances lie might be offered the opportunity to shadow councillors from more than one party. This would align well with the cross-party non-partisan nature of the Taskforce.

Other suggestions from delivery partners involved including in each speaker's biography a short explanation of why they entered politics and why they chose to represent their particular party. Another idea was that data could have been collected at the time of registration that would have enabled women to be directed to local information so that they could have looked into the local situation ahead of the event.

“Somehow to create some space where they would have found out a little bit more. It would have been really useful for them to type in their postcode and find out who their Council is and who they ought to therefore be contacting, so link that up.” (Delivery partner)

4.5 Progress and Development of Participants

This research has attempted to track, to some small extent, participants' progress in pursuing a role in public life; it gauged where women were in October 2009 and again, in March 2010. It was hampered by the difficulty of getting the engagement of women in the research and the interval between the waves of the survey was very short in which to see any major changes. However, it did highlight some great strides taken by a number of women involved in the various strands of the programme. Of the 66 women who responded to the later round of research, seventeen had put themselves forward as candidates, fourteen had been shortlisted to stand as a councillor or Parliamentary candidate. Of these women, ten were selected and four were elected on May 6 2010. There are also likely to be others who did not take part in the research or who may stand in 2011. From the feedback received from the women, while some may have sought office on their own initiative at some point, it is clear that they would not have done so as quickly if the programme had not been in place.

Given that the Taskforce has brought together a cohort of women who have shared certain experiences, this provides an opportunity to track the progress that the women make over time and gain a better understanding of their 'journey'. This was also something that some of the Taskforce members and other delivery partners supported. It may well be that some of the cohort seek and achieve various roles in public life either through holding public office or through community development while others may choose not to do so or may be unable to pursue such goals. They may however perform a valuable role in encouraging other BAME women to see themselves as potential candidates for a role in public life. Although this research has demonstrated the difficulties of contacting and gaining a response from the women, by gathering evidence about the journeys of even a limited number, this may help understand how some of the more deep-rooted barriers are operating or may reveal examples of how such barriers can be and have been overcome. OBV will be keeping in touch with the graduates of the shadowing and mentoring scheme through their alumni programme which could contribute this tracking.

5 Outreach Events

Box 4: Headline impacts of outreach events

- 91% of the those attending an event rated it as 'fairly or very good'; 54% rated it 'very good'
- 97% 'agreed' that they would recommend the event to a friend or family member; 54% 'agreed strongly' that they would recommend it
- 95% of attendees said that the event had made them more aware of the lack of BAME women in public life
- 94% reported that the event made them more aware of how they might benefit from becoming a councillor
- 91% said that the event had made them more aware of what a local councillor does
- 90% agreed that having attended the event, they knew how to access information about how to become a councillor (though they also would have liked to have been given a clear and succinct summary of their next steps)
- 70% reported that the event they attended had made it more likely that they would consider becoming a councillor and 80% were more likely to consider other positions in public life
- The events had other 'softer' effects such as creating a sense of entitlement and solidarity, inspiring and energising the women
- A high proportion of women discussed the idea of becoming a councillor with family and friends following the event and others sought more information on the internet
- One woman (that we know of) who attended an event (but did not take part in the shadowing and mentoring or do the community leadership course) was elected as a local councillor in May 2010.

5.1 Introduction

Sixteen outreach events were held in cities across England, Scotland and Wales between July 2008 and July 2009. They were attended by a total of nearly 1,100 women. The events were mostly held in the council chambers of town halls and lasted some two hours. They featured a number of speakers who included Taskforce members, local and national political figures and women who had made their mark in the business and voluntary sectors. Question and answer sessions were incorporated into the programmes. Opportunities were given for attendees to network both before and after the presentations and a 'marketplace' of literature was on offer for them to pick

up, in addition to information on their tables and in bags on their seats in the council chamber²².

The evidence base for the evaluation of this strand of the Taskforce's work consists of:

- Observations and informal conversations with attendees at the last two events (Luton and Bradford)
- A synthesis of the feedback forms provided by attendees at each event as it finished
- Focus group discussions with women who attended five of the events (Camden, Islington, South London, Leicester and Bradford)
- Findings from the first wave of the tracking survey from 81 women who had attended an event.

Much of the findings were reported in the report of the Taskforce but some of the key findings are included here too for completeness. The detailed findings of the tracking survey are included in section A.2.

The highlights of the impact of the outreach event programme are shown in Box 4.

5.2 Profile of Event Attendees

The women who expressed an interest in finding out about becoming a councillor were not starting from first base; **the majority were active in their community or played a role in a local organisation.**

569 out of the 1082 women attending an event completed a feedback form (response rate = 53%). These revealed that nearly three-quarters (72%) were actively involved in some form of voluntary or community organisation and nearly half were involved in a sport/leisure or cultural group (45%) and/or a church or religious organisation (44%). Four in every ten (42%) were school governors and one in four (26%) were active

²² This information included data about under representation of BAME women, biographies of the Taskforce members, a list of the strategic partners and political contacts (both national and local), various government publications about women in public life and the Government response to the Councillors Commission.

members of a trade union or a business/professional organisation. One in every seven (14%) were involved with a local public body and just over 10 percent (12%) were actively involved in a political party. Five percent of the women were serving magistrates.

This picture of a high level of involvement in public life was reinforced by the findings of the first wave of the tracking survey. Of the 119 replies received, 85% of the women had some involvement in their local community (see A.2.2). It was also supported by the informal conversations with some of the women at two of the events and the focus groups that followed. A large proportion of these women worked in the public or third sector while a few worked in businesses that focused on helping BAME women in achieving their goals. Several had considerable experience of establishing community and business initiatives.

The fact that many of these women were already part of an organisation or network was also seen in the fact that just under a third (29%) of the women who completed an event feedback form had heard about the event through a network, organisation or mailing list. The importance of the links and relationships between the women in supporting each other's interest, was further seen in the fact that another third of those responding had been told about the event by members of their family or friends and indeed, many came along to the event with sisters, mothers, and friends.

Some of the women were very much self-starters; they were not already part of a network but had, by themselves, decided that they were interested in finding out about participation in public life and had come across information about the event on the internet via a Google search (sometimes routed through the OBV website), their local council's website or on a library notice board.

5.3 Motivations for Attending an Event

Talking to the women who attended the last two events in Luton and Bradford, revealed that they had come along to the event with a range of motivations and expectations; some seemed to have already decided that being a councillor or at least, participating in public life, was a step they wished to take while others were at an earlier stage in their journey and simply wanted to find out more. A few were less convinced that a role in public life was for them or for them at that time (often they felt fully occupied with young

families) but nevertheless, they attended the events because they wanted to find out more. A couple said they were also intrigued to find out how serious the government was about bringing BAME women into political life so that they could decide whether their participation would be more than tokenism. A few came along to support and encourage the women they had accompanied.

Most of the women taking part in the focus groups had attended the events with little existing knowledge about what being a councillor involved and how one got to be one. Even a woman who had been selected two days before an event to stand as a councillor, hoped to come along and find out more! A couple of others had been fairly convinced that they wanted to seek office as a councillor, but for most, **their ambitions were at a very early stage** – they needed more information to find out if it was something for them.

“The people at the grassroots level keep saying, ‘why don’t you become a councillor?’ because some of them have been dissatisfied with what’s going on. So I thought, ‘let me go and have a look at what it is.’” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Leicester)

Generally, the motivation for attending was to acquire the knowledge to help the women appraise their own skills, qualities and capacity to make the required commitment, and help them decide whether being a councillor was something they might consider now or in the future. A number reported that part of this was seeing the calibre of the other women who attended and comparing their experience with their own.

A few attended to acquire more information so that they could then encourage and inform other BAME women. Some were open-minded about how they might play a role in public life and serve their community, and hoped to find out about other opportunities too.

Two women who took part in the focus groups had already put themselves forward for selection as councillors (one for the last four years) but had been unsuccessful. They were keen to find out what the Taskforce was doing in the hope that it would offer some kind of support in achieving their goal, and shows how the Taskforce was able to reach some of its target audience:

“That’s what I was hoping for, that it would be something practical. How are they going to help women practically, on the ground, that if you want to become a

councillor, these are the lines of help that are available for you?" (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Bradford)

5.4 Views on the Events

From the feedback forms it was clear that the women had a very favourable opinion of the events (see 5.5.also). The majority of attendees (91%) rated the event they attended as either 'fairly' or 'very good', and most (57%) rated it 'very good'. Some 97% of attendees who completed a questionnaire at an event agreed that they would recommend the event to a friend or member of their family; 54% 'strongly agreed' that they would recommend it.

However, for a small minority (often the women who were most focused on a goal in public life), their hopes and expectations were not completely fulfilled in the events or what came after. A number who were interviewed immediately after the events or who took part in the focus groups many months later, felt that they had left the events without the information they were seeking and not knowing how things would be progressed. This knowledge gap was reinforced by the first wave of the tracking survey in which women were asked what kind of further support they needed. Of the 66 women who had attended an event, only 6% indicated that they had all the information and support they needed, while 68% requested clear guidance on the steps they would need to follow to become a councillor.

This apparent contradiction between the extremely positive immediate response to the information provided and the more considered response may be attributable to the fact that the women left the events with a great deal of information, both from the presentations and literature they were given. While they might have expected this to give them what they needed to know (and therefore responded very positively), they subsequently found that they were not motivated to go through all the information and would have preferred to have something that spelt out their next steps very clearly and succinctly.

Several women also expressed disappointment, and some anger, at the lack of follow-up that they anticipated following the events. While e-bulletins were issued to attendees who signed up for them and these had links to more information that was available, there was an expectation that there would be further development opportunities. The

gap between the early events and announcement of the shadowing and mentoring scheme and community leadership course probably contributed to this.

5.5 Impact of the Events

As described by the women themselves, the events had a number of notable impacts; some of them practical while others were more emotional. In terms of ambitions, 70% of women who completed an event feedback form reported that the event had made it more likely that they would consider becoming a councillor. This figure increased to 79% of women who had previously thought about becoming a councillor. In much the same way, 80% of women were more likely to think about putting themselves forward for some other position in public life (see Table 3).

Only a very small proportion of women reported that they had been put off public life through attending an event. 5% reported they were less likely to consider becoming a councillor and only 2% were less likely to consider other roles.

Table 3: After attending this event, how likely are you to consider becoming a councillor or another position in public life?

After attending this event, how likely are you to consider becoming a councillor?		After attending this event, how likely are you to consider another position in public life?	
Base	464	base	457
Less likely	5%	Less likely	2%
No Difference	25%	No Difference	18%
More Likely	70%	More Likely	80%

Base: Event attendees completing a self-completion questionnaire

These figures were reinforced by the results of the first wave of the tracking survey among a smaller proportion of the women in October 2009; they would have attended an event at some point between three and fifteen months prior to taking part in the first wave of the survey. Of the 81 respondents who had attended an event, and despite the gap since the event, 64% (n=52) felt that it had made them more interested in becoming a councillor and just 9% thought it had made them less interested (see A.2.3).

The research explored what the women had taken away from the events. Among the practical outcomes, there was:

- A clear **enhancement of awareness of the under-representation of BAME women in public life** with 95% of attendees completing a feedback form saying that the event had made them more aware of this. The fact that the event was taking place was viewed very positively (it was long overdue for some women) and it was generally felt to have raised awareness of the need for greater representation by BAME women and to have provided a glimpse of what might be possible to address this.

“I thought it was an excellent idea, I think it’s the first time that black women have been encouraged into political life.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, South London)

“It’s a good start. I think it’s a brilliant start.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, North London)

- An **increase in knowledge**; of those completing an event feedback form:
 - 91% said that the event had made them more aware of what a local councillor does and
 - 90% agreed that having attended the event, they knew how to access information about becoming a councillor
 - 94% reported that the event made them more aware of how they might benefit from becoming a councillor.

The figure of 90% agreeing that they now knew how to access information about becoming a councillor may seem at odds with the finding reported in 5.4 that some women were frustrated about not having a clear idea about what their next steps should be. As explained there, this may be explained by the difference between knowing that you have been given the information in the presentations or literature and therefore you can seek it out if you are motivated to do so, and the desire for your next steps to be spelt out for you very clearly and concisely.

The focus groups highlighted some of the ‘softer’ but often more striking emotional impacts of the events including:

- The **sense of entitlement** that came from recognition of the issue of under-representation and the need to address it, and from acknowledgement of the fact that BAME women have a valuable contribution to make.

“I think what stood out was this was the first time that ethnic minority women were given some importance, that an event of this calibre has been organised, and it’s been in all the major cities. Because we’ve been in England for a long time now, and we haven’t seen anything like this.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Leicester)

“To have an event where we were asked to come into that arena in order to change what was happening in our community, I thought it was an excellent idea.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, South London)

- **Inspiring** the women to think that their participation in the political arena was possible. The presentations given by serving or former women councillors at the events provided some very motivating stories with which the women could identify.

“They inspired me and everyone else that we can do it, so we believe in ourselves.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, South London)

“I just really admired her honesty and talking about her past. And it shows you that anyone can become a leader and anybody can lead.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Bradford)

A member of the Taskforce who spoke at more than one of the events, described the effect that this new awareness of what was possible had on her.

“I think we awakened something in an awful lot of people doing all of these road shows... you’re talking about your experiences and what you suddenly see in peoples eyes is they go from listening to you and just being polite and interested, and then all of a sudden, something happens ... there’s a sparkle, and when you saw that sparkle, it lights up the room. When that penny drops and people realise that this is not just for a certain elite bunch, that this is for anybody who is caring, is passionate, who wants to make a difference, that is an amazing feeling.” (Delivery partner)

Inspiration for the women also came from rubbing shoulders with what everyone could see was a pool of impressive BAME female talent, validating the fact that greater representation was both needed and possible.

“That, for me, was definitely a stepping stone ... for me, it was seeing that people like myself who had made a difference, just seeing so many people who were all so interested. I didn’t feel like a lone voice, there’s a load of sisters out there of all nationalities who really want to make a difference and I felt a sense of community and belonging.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, North London)

- The **sense of solidarity** among the women and the potential of the support that could come from this as they began to identify and harness the networking opportunities.

“It was that sense of, that we’re all in this together, we all want to do, and we’re all sort of moving forwards in the same direction, the same issues affect us, regardless of where we are. The first thing is the fact we’re all women and we have these barriers ... there was that sense that we’d help each other. You talked to people, you met people. On the face of it, we all look totally different, because I have this thing where people, because you look the same, you must be the same, and the fact we weren’t, but there was still some commonalities, things that we’d experienced and we felt we could help each other, so I think that was really important.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Leicester)

“I wanted to meet other women that had the same passion as me and I wanted to meet other leaders who were keen to do what I wanted to do. And I did that. I did meet other women. I think it’s important as well that, as women, we do get together and have gatherings in different arenas as well, not just with your family and friends. So that was one of my expectations and I got that. I knew I’d leave with information and I got that... and I got the opportunity to hear an inspiring councillor.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Bradford)

- The women were **energised** by the heightened sense of what was possible and as shown in Table 3 above, many felt that they wanted to push onward with their ambition or pursue some other role in public life.
- The hope was also expressed that the events had had an **impact on local councillors** who might see that there was a need to take notice of the agenda and seriously consider BAME women for selection

“It was motivating because it’s brought the agenda to the surface and it’s made people start thinking. Hopefully, it’s also made the local politicians start thinking as well, and at the local level, the selection level - made them start thinking that if the government is wanting to do that, we’ll have to start doing it. And if people have raised issues, we need to do something about it. So I’m really hoping something positive comes out of it.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Leicester)

For the survey of October 2009, earlier reported impacts were played back to the 81 women who responded and who had attended an event to see if they had also felt this. Over half of these women (see A.2.3) felt that they had gained a positive feeling from seeing so many capable, talented women at the event, that their mind had been opened to what was possible, that they could see the potential for networking and that the event reinforced the importance of the work they were doing in the community, inspiring them to do more to help others. This demonstrates that bringing women together as part of

their 'journey' towards becoming a councillor can have benefits that extend beyond simply passing on information. The events inspired the women and gave a sense of being part of a group focused on the same aim. This 'cohort effect' is something that might be harnessed in the future.

5.6 Perceptions of Support Required

When they completed the feedback form at the end of the event, the two forms of support that the women felt would best help them realise their ambition to become councillors were a mentoring programme (72%) and having the opportunity to shadow a councillor (66%). When invited to suggest other forms of information or support they felt would help them in their efforts to become a councillor, the proposals clustered into a number of themes. These are summarised in Box 5.

The first wave of the tracking survey reinforced the need for such support with over half of those who had attended an event expressing the view that they would be helped by shadowing and mentoring opportunities, training workshops and seminars, regular contact with a local councillor and/or support from a local network of women with similar ambitions.

It can be seen that while the events had encouraged their desire to become a councillor, the women felt that they needed further support in progressing their goal. The Taskforce responded to the feedback from the events by developing and offering the shadowing and mentoring programme and the community leadership course but funding was available for only a limited number of women to take part in these. This meant that for the majority of women attending the events who were inspired to become a councillor, there was no follow-on activity.

Box 5: Other forms of information or support to help women in their efforts to become a councillor

base: those completing an event feedback form and suggesting other ways of helping women; n=38

- Skills development e.g. coaching in how to develop and apply political skills, public speaking
- Improved understanding of
 - the political process and local political structures
 - the process to become a councillor including entry criteria
 - the role, remuneration, legal responsibilities and power of a councillor

- Personal support in the form of financial support, childcare (a crèche), support from employers and from the ward secretary
- Mechanisms by which support/information might be delivered
 - Facebook group
 - seminars, conferences
 - opportunities to attend forums with councillors and MPs and to observe council sessions
 - toolkit and case studies (could be online) to help understand the process
 - meetings with small groups of BME women, disability groups
 - regular networking.

5.7 What Happened Next?

The findings from the first wave of the tracking survey (October 2009) show that three-quarters of the women who attended an event (76%; n=50) went on to discuss the idea with family and/or friends and nearly half (47%, n=31) looked on the internet for information about what they should do next or tried to find out about the political parties.

The type of action taken after attending an event is demonstrated in greater detail by the women in the focus groups who had gone on to progress their interest in becoming a councillor in various ways. These included:

- **Internet searches:** searches for further information about becoming a councillor had been conducted on the Government Equalities Office website and Directgov although there was some feeling that they had not found the clear step by step information there that they needed
- **Contacting political parties:** This had been on the minds of several of the women at the focus groups and they had not found it easy to decide which party to approach. Two women had approached a national political party contact and one had met up with this person. She was invited to attend a workshop the party was running for new members but had been advised to take a friend along because there would be 'all sorts of people there' – she understood this to mean that she might feel uncomfortable if she went by herself. The other woman had made contact by email and been advised to approach the local political parties. She had done so and been met by a lack of welcome that she interpreted as

their feeling threatened. In a further case, a similar response met a woman who had spoken to her local councillor.

On a more positive note, this feedback shows that the national party contacts were responding to the women who expressed an interest. Feedback showed that just over twenty women from the events had attended a practical workshop run by one party, providing information about the selection process and how they could best present themselves to increase their chances of selection. Ten of the women had also attended the party conference. Of the 38 women making contact with the political contact following the events, four were selected to stand as councillors and a further two were being encouraged to think of standing for the London Assembly. This same contact also made the point that they were keeping in contact with the women at a national level to see how they fare at a local level.

- **Mentoring/shadowing:** several of the women had pursued this, most often by applying for the shadowing and mentoring programme delivered by OBV but also in one case, by trying to arrange something herself with a local councillor.
- **Seeking out other opportunities:** a number of women had attended events related to other areas of public life and one had completed a leadership programme. Some were looking into becoming a school governor or applying for public appointments and a few expressed a desire (and sometimes a preference) for becoming an MP.
- **Greater community involvement:** Some talked of the event providing the impetus to do more in their community; one woman had approached two young men she knew about in her community and helped them get on to a local training course by accompanying them to college.
- **Spreading the word:** In some cases, women spoke of how friends and family were affected by the fact that they were 'on a high' immediately after the event. Some had clearly spread the word themselves by simply talking to people; in one case, a woman's daughter (who had not been to an event) had been inspired to contact a political party and to apply for the mentoring/shadowing course herself

(she was successful). Another woman had emailed a young woman whom she thought was a potential candidate.

“So I’m more than happy to encourage my sisters to stand in solidarity and become councillors.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, North London)

“So seeing them, the young women, I’m over 50 and as a result I can’t class myself as a young woman anymore. So as a result, seeing my daughter, she is 30 years old, so somebody like that who I would love them to come forward because they have a lot of skill, experience, who can help other women. And I was passionate to see so many young Asian woman because you know, it’s like what they used to say that the place of women is in the kitchen, crossing that barrier that so many people are afraid to cross, that actually impressed me and that satisfaction is enough for me, that day.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Bradford)

In fact, one of the women (who had taken part in an MP shadowing scheme run by OBV in 2006/07) subsequently attended an event and was selected to stand for, and was elected to, a seat representing the Albion ward in Dagenham and Barking. She attributes her success in part to attending one of the outreach events (see Box 6).

Box 6: A recently elected councillor describes the effect of attending an event

I attended one of the events and I was really inspired by the speakers, many of whom were councillors. It made me feel like if they could do it, I could, as they were just normal everyday people like me. The advice given was really practical and useful and I went away with lots of useful nuggets to put into action.

Sanchia Alasia: Councillor for Dagenham and Barking

5.8 Media Coverage of the Events

Details about the media coverage relating to the events are included in the report of the Taskforce (section 3.6). This included 88 articles in print and 75 online, 30 interviews and features on radio and 13 features on TV, all providing very positive coverage of the key messages about the underrepresentation of BAME women and how the work of the Taskforce is seeking to address this. The campaign succeeded in securing local coverage pre-event, on the day of the event and following it and some of the Taskforce members secured ongoing columns in the ethnic press.

There was some criticism from delivery partners that it did not achieve national coverage and conversely, that it did not make use of media that would take publicity for the events into the homes of many of the women at whom they were aimed. One of the Taskforce members and some of the attendees suggested that efforts to bring the events to the attention of potential attendees should have been more assertive and

community focused. A suggestion in Bradford, for example, was that posters should have been displayed or leaflets distributed in the White Abbey Road area of the city which is frequented by Asian women.

5.9 Learning Points

The programme of sixteen outreach events was delivered in a short time and with limited resources. Despite these constraints, it succeeded in making a considerable impact on those who attended. From the comments made about the events in various parts of the research and our own observations, we have identified a number of suggestions for how improvements might be made should a similar programme be developed. These should not be read as criticisms of what has gone before but as food for thought for future work. Some of these ideas assume resources that were not available to the team putting together the outreach events and one cannot hope to meet the individual needs of everyone who attends given their different backgrounds, information needs and learning styles.

5.9.1 Marketing the events

- The research has shown great diversity in the women who were attracted to the events, in terms of their age, ethnicity, and current involvement in community, if not public life, and one of the key learning points is that they could be targeted accordingly. It was suggested, for example, that women who are already active in their communities and feel confident about their role in society may need a different type of support (indeed, there was a suggestion that they might prefer to be addressed as women rather than BAME women). They already feel entitled to a role in public life; now they need to know what they have to do. On the other hand, those women who are less involved and less aware of the opportunities may need greater encouragement to become more so, before being able to pursue a particular goal. It was suggested that instead of focusing on the role of councillor, it would be helpful to have a day of workshops in which women can find out about and discuss a range of roles in public life.
- In targeting the two groups, different methods may be necessary; emails circulated among networks seem to have hit many who are already actively engaged while it was felt that a broader campaign based on local newspapers,

street posters, local radio and outreach into the communities was probably needed to reach the second group who probably have a more latent interest in becoming engaged.

“It would be nice if everyone had this inbuilt awareness, they could be a councillor but I don’t think we’re anywhere near that level now so it’s going to have to be a little bit kind of grassroots and talent spotting...”

... It’s not the kind of job you see in careers advice, is it? So it’s not one that you automatically think about. So I think it’s something that’s got to be top down and bottom up, because I think it’s something that you’ve got to get MPs to look at. I think people have got to lead by example, by doing shadowing schemes themselves, going to places, going to the big churches, to the mosques or temples where they are going to get that group of people and saying, making a cry out to people that it’s genuine because people can spot a fake if it’s just about numbers.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, North London)

“It would be nice to advertise in local papers about upcoming events.” (Comment in event feedback questionnaire)

- Several women (especially those who saw themselves as mentors for younger women) offered themselves as channels for reaching into communities and publicising future events. There was also a feeling that local women could usefully help plan and organise such events since they know what local women need, and they have the connections in the area to bring them in. Indeed, the comment was made that GEO now has a useful contact list of BAME women who are working actively in their communities that could prove to be a very useful resource. Among the delivery partners, were those who also felt that local organisations in the voluntary and education sectors might also be well placed to identify and reach out to these groups.

5.9.2 Structure, content and tone of the events

- The events featured inspirational presentations from women in prominent positions, often in political life. While many of these were appreciated, some of those attending the events felt that the process of becoming a councillor could have been given more time. The information that attendees were interested in included remuneration, the less tangible rewards of being a councillor, the challenges and the support given to councillors in doing their work:

“I think there was a bit about ‘this is hard work’, but it was really all about ‘this is a grand thing and it’ll be very rewarding’ which it is, but I think prospective councillors need to know exactly what they’re going into.” (Delivery partner)

- In one of the observed events, a councillor speaking from the floor described the challenges of office she had faced and it was noted by some of the attendees that it was difficult for the facilitator to handle this unexpected and rather negative interjection in a way that was more constructive. In thinking about future events, consideration should be given to how the very real challenges of taking office can be dealt with proactively and constructively in the presentations.
- Some of the attendees also felt that the speakers sometimes covered similar ground and they therefore need to be selected so that they each have something new and distinct to say.
- At a few of the events, more prominent politicians appeared as speakers and the view was expressed by some of the delivery partners that while this might have attracted more people to the event, their presence distracted from the task in hand, in part because such figures are so removed from the women. Such comments might be considered when thinking strategically about the purpose of the events.
- Genuinely interactive sessions were seen as important by the women and the delivery partners so that the issues of relevance to the women could be aired and discussed, and critical information shared. This is something that could be achieved through time and space for break-out sessions. In smaller groups, it was suggested that speakers could then focus on the women rather than themselves, encouraging audience participation by inviting the women to share their contributions:

“So what you do is, you get a shout out and you say, ‘we want your ideas, we want your participation’ ... so you shout out and say, ‘what are you doing already?’ And then somebody shouts out, ‘oh I run the local choir, I do the boy scouts, I raise money for the PTA’, whatever. I would have liked to have seen more of that. Okay, half of it are the great stories of, ‘look I come from this background and no-one ever expected me to make it but look at me now.’ That was great, all that was really super. Then part two should have been, how these people there could be so good. How these people there could get there. So more practical.” (Delivery partner)

- Women were different in how they responded to the tone of an event or the delivery of a speaker; some loved the heightened sense of emotion that came from a feeling of solidarity and empowerment while others felt that this obscured

communication of the practical messages; some found speakers inspirational while others thought them rather self-congratulatory. In similar future events, the tone and pitch could be intentionally varied to keep women engaged and meet their different needs.

5.9.3 Organisational aspects

- While locating events in council chambers gave women a sense of where the business of the council is done (and underlined the seriousness of the intent), it may not have been the most appropriate venue for all sessions. The size and formality of the chamber makes smaller group interaction difficult and can be somewhat intimidating. Therefore future events could begin and end in the chamber, but in between, break into smaller sessions in nearby rooms.
- A great deal of reading material was made available to women at the events, both on individual seats and in the 'marketplace' where more literature could be selected. As noted at 5.4, finding the balance of material provided is important; many felt that they were given too much, which deterred them from going through their packs. Where it is necessary to include the heavier background documents, these could be offered separately, available for people to pick up if they are interested.
- The response of some attendees indicated an appetite for an even longer event. This could be used to deliver even more information, to hold more interactive sessions and for further networking, both with the different spokespeople and with each other.

5.9.4 Follow-up

- The energy and interest created on the day should be immediately harnessed by a 'call to action'. In the later events, this was provided by the invitation to apply for the mentoring and shadowing programme, however, not everybody picked up on this at the event nor found the form for it. Earlier events were held so far in advance of the programme, that it was not then possible to signpost the women to the scheme although contact details were collected from participants at all events to enable promotion of the programme at a later date.

- Resources permitting, women could be invited to sign up for, for example, smaller group work (seminars, workshops) to provide more information or to provide an opportunity for two-way communication and to discuss whether their skills and background might equip them to be a councillor (or some other role in public life). Some wanted mentoring to be made available to everyone with an interest in it so that they could discuss the opportunities that might be open to them and be supported in their efforts to take advantage of them. Future events might, if the opportunity exists, signpost women to a recognisable programme of events (be it provided by GEO, the local authority, political parties or the third sector) to help them progress their ambitions. This would further signal seriousness of intent.
- Findings suggest the importance of managing expectations of what will happen after events, especially where women are asked to sign up for more information, and will therefore expect to receive this information. Where the onus is passed to them to take the next steps, they will need to know what these are and feel supported in taking them. Websites that are flagged up to interested women should contain the guidance they seek.
- Given that many of the women do not have political affiliations and express ignorance or cynicism about the views of / differences between the political parties, it was suggested that presentations might be made by the local parties (at a single meeting) so that they can set out their views on key local issues.
- Given the response (perceived as negative) that a small number of women had received from the political parties, there was a feeling that more needed to be done by political parties from the top downwards to ensure a more welcoming attitude from party members and office holders.

“I think it’s good, positive, there needs to be more of that sort of thing, more encouragement. But unfortunately it can come from the central government up top. What happens locally is different.” (Focus group discussion, Event Attendee, Leicester)

6 Shadowing and Mentoring Programme

Box 7: Headline impacts of shadowing and mentoring programme

- The shadowing and mentoring programme resulted in a statistically significant increase in the women's knowledge about what it means to be a councillor; this included knowledge about what a councillor does, the skills and qualities needed to be one, the steps to becoming one and how to approach a political party
- Women who had taken part in the programme showed a statistically significant improvement in their overall attitude scores as measured on twelve statements about becoming a councillor. Most notable were the decrease in concern about gaining the support of the local community and about other councillors not being welcoming
- The programme was particularly valuable for providing insights into life as a councillor and a structure to help women pursue their goal. For some of the most motivated, it also acts as a springboard for their political ambitions allowing them to draw on the credibility of OBV and giving them the confidence to push for and take advantage of opportunities
- Three-quarters of those taking part in the shadowing and mentoring programme felt they still wished to become a councillor and others were open to the idea of pursuing a role in public life
- Eleven of the women that we know of had put themselves forward as candidates in the local (and general) election of May 2010. Nine had been shortlisted to stand as a councillor or MP and of these, seven were selected. Three went on to be elected as local councillors.

6.1 Introduction

Over one hundred women were interviewed in the autumn of 2009 for a place on the shadowing and mentoring programme funded by the Government Equalities Office (GEO) and delivered by Operation Black Vote (OBV). Originally, fifty places were funded by the GEO but this was extended to sixty places due to demand; these were spread across over fifty local authority areas. Across the cohort of selected women, a range of ethnic origins, ages and political leanings were represented.

The programme offered women the opportunity to shadow councillors for a minimum of six days over a five month period in order to gain 'first hand knowledge of the role and responsibilities of councillors, serving officers and an insight into the Authority's systems and procedures.' Wherever possible, the women shadowed councillors from the local authority in which they lived or worked. On occasion however, if a councillor was not

available of their preferred political affiliation locally, they shadowed a councillor in another local authority. In addition, the women were each assigned a 'virtual mentor', another councillor of their chosen party who did not live locally but with whom they could 'talk' and gain advice by email, telephone and /or Skype.

The programme was launched at the Camden outreach event in April 2009 and applications for places were then invited. Applications were initially invited from women who had attended one of the events. The take-up proved to be lower than expected and the scheme was then opened up to the contacts of the strategic partners. OBV was particularly active in publicising the scheme and making those on their database aware of it. Interviews took place in the summer at four regional locations (making the venues more local was appreciated) and those selected attended a high profile event during Black History Month (October) in London to mark the beginning of the programme. This event was in two parts; the first was an induction for the women shadows and councillors who were to be shadowed (each group was seen separately and then brought together so that the councillors and their shadows could meet). The second part, held at the House of Commons, was the launch of the scheme by Harriet Harman QC MP and Minister for Women and Equalities at the time.

Participants were also expected to take on the role of 'community ambassador' 'promoting political engagement, voter registration and turnout within their local communities'. Depending on their personal contacts and level of experience or skills, this might take the form of a community meeting or deputation at a local Council meeting. They might also write diary accounts, blog entries or an article relating something of their experiences on the programme for inclusion on the OBV website.

A national leadership seminar²³ was organised by OBV in late January 2010 to develop understanding of the role of the media, public speaking skills and the process of selection.

²³ The national leadership seminar provided some media training (media interviewing, managing the media and use of new media) and presentations by representatives of the main parties and the Independent Group Office of the LGA on the process of being elected.

Just as the organisation of the outreach events proved to be an extremely challenging undertaking, so it was with the setting up and delivery of the shadowing and mentoring programme. In both cases, the work involved in delivery was far greater than originally envisaged as the project evolved. For example, the original plan was to run the shadowing and mentoring scheme in the 16 local authorities where the events had been held but once it was opened up to women who had not attended an event, this was widened to some 50 local authorities. While the evaluation of the shadowing and mentoring scheme revealed some criticism as well as praise from participants, the considerable achievements of the scheme and the hard work and commitment of OBV should be recognised.

The evaluation of the shadowing and mentoring programme took the form of a tracking survey that was conducted before and during women's involvement in the programme, telephone depth interviews with women on the scheme, and a survey by questionnaire and telephone interviews with a small number of councillors who were being shadowed.

37 of the women (62%) on the programme responded to the first wave of the survey. Just over a third of the women (35%) responded to the second wave of the tracking survey (n=21) which asked them about their progress on the scheme and its impact on their attitudes and ambitions. Nine women were interviewed in greater depth by telephone, only one of whom also responded to the survey; feedback is therefore from 30 or half of programme participants as part of the second wave. The findings need to be treated with caution as the base size is small. It should also be borne in mind that when surveyed, many of the women had not completed the scheme.

The key impacts of the shadowing and mentoring programme are shown in Box 7.

6.2 Participation in the Scheme

At the time of the second wave survey in March 2010, seven of the 21 responding had completed the programme while twelve were due to complete it in the next few weeks. One woman was unable to complete it because, as she reported, of a lack of support and involvement from the councillor she had been assigned; another had started but because her 'mentor had lost their job', she was unable to continue.

Both the women who had completed the programme and those who were still engaged in it had done a range of things as part of their shadowing activities (see Box 8). Some of the women’s experiences are illustrated below with extracts from their diaries; these are featured in full on the Operation Black Vote website.

Box 8: Examples of activities undertaken by women as part of their shadowing

- Attending party meetings
- Attending council meetings; scrutiny meetings, planning meetings, council and cabinet
- Attending surgeries
- Being taken to various meetings, sitting in on a training meeting
- Meeting other councillors and people involved in the local political scene (including the occasional MP)
- Campaigning, canvassing, leaflet dropping
- Having a tour of the council
- Visits to City Hall, London Assembly

A lunch meeting with ... the Lib Dem PPC (Prospective Parliamentary Candidate, I had to look that term up) ... gave me further support and guidance. She was brilliant at immediately connecting me with the networks and subgroups that existed to encourage the Chinese community to engage with politics. She also made me feel ‘inexperienced’ rather than ‘ignorant’ at all the questions I had about politics and feeling slightly out of my depth.

26th January 2010 - Attend Planning & Development Control Committee Meeting

Provision was made for me to sit as close as possible to the councillors in the gallery so that I was able to closely observe what was going on. The meeting was at the council chamber and started at 5.30 pm. My mentor happened to be chair of the committee so I was to see him in full action. It was interesting to see how planning decisions were made. I carefully listened to the head of litigation as he meted out advice and the head of planning, management and delivery as he answered the questions posed to him. Although the meeting was not a peaceful affair, (an applicant disrupted the proceedings as they were unhappy with the outcome of their application) I left feeling justified because the supporting evidence in each application made it easy (in my mind) to arrive at fair decisions. Following the meeting a few councillors asked if I had made up my mind about becoming a councillor and remarked how rewarding they found the job.

Councillor ... represents a neighbouring ward. It falls within a different Parliamentary constituency than the one I live in and is currently held by Labour. She takes my education a lot further. She invites me to attend and observe a ward surgery she holds on a Saturday morning in the local library with her colleagues. Although it was well advertised, no-one turns up specifically to see them. Instead, the councillors introduce themselves to people who are using the library or just walking past in the street and ask if there is anything they could help with. In general, almost everyone seemed content with council services; however, after a lot of thought, a few identified minor issues such as problems with parking, noise nuisance from leaf blowers used by neighbours, and use of petrol-driven leaf blowers instead of "green" brooms by council street cleaners.

23rd January 2010 - Attend a Local Surgery

My mentor invited me to the recreation centre where the drop-ins were more than happy to have me shadow their councillor. Three residents came to the surgery that day with planning requests which were carefully listened to. They were advised that these would be dealt with following consultations with the relevant council officers and the outcomes given in writing. Throughout the sessions, the residents were reminded to contact any of the councillors that hold sessions at the centre if they had any issues as the councillors constantly worked together to resolve issues. I found this very helpful and encouraging as you were made to feel valued.

16th November

Meet ... and he gives me the grand tour of the Council. Have been there before for numerous health/social care meetings., but for the first time go into the council chambers. Very austere, but every inch the modern impressive, functionary committee room. He informs me of the rules, regulations and processes, who sits where, who talks, who proposes. Very process driven, but I do like my pomp and splendour.

A number of women responding to the online survey, outlined the sort of support and advice they received from the councillor they were shadowing. This support seemed to group into firstly, advice about the technicalities of the process and how things work in local politics and secondly, more personal advice about how to make one's mark and if elected, how to cope with council work alongside the demands of daily life. In the first category would be the provision of dates for meetings, signposting to the local party office, how meetings work, who is who in the council, how the local party is doing and how to canvass. In the latter category was discussion of how 'to get there', the realities of being a public servant, the support available, how full time work can be juggled with council work.

My mentor was very amenable and frank in her discussion about being a councillor. Although some of what she told me was stuff I had already learnt on the scheme, I had a deeper appreciation of the level of commitment involved as she related her walk to becoming a councillor and her life now as a councillor. She hammered home the importance of the Seven Principles of Public Life and getting involved/noticed in my community/Party so that when I was ready to stand, my reputation would speak for itself. I have taken her advice and for starters would be applying to be a school governor at a secondary school. Secondly, I would be registering with my political party. Thirdly, I will see where else my community involvement takes me.

The nine women who were interviewed in greater depth by telephone had also had a variety of experiences. Eight had participated, at least to some extent, in the shadowing part of the programme as intended; the other had been unable to get started with the councillor she had been assigned. Two of the women had been instrumental in arranging shadowing opportunities through their own personal contacts. One woman who had started the programme had given it up due to taking up a job opportunity.

The most active respondents spoke enthusiastically of the range of experiences they had been exposed to from attending scrutiny committees and surgeries through to canvassing by telephone or on the doorstep and attending events with 'their' councillor. A small number had done far more than the six allotted days and were regularly helping out with campaigning for the election including encouraging people to register to vote.

"Lots of people in the area that I'm visiting ... 63% BME population, most of the people you are seeing may not have voted or registered – spreading the work to make sure everyone registers and votes." (Telephone interview with shadow)

A couple were helping candidates in more than one constituency; in one case, one of these was in the Midlands and the other on the South coast. The most active were building up their contacts with councillors and on occasion, local MPs, sometimes canvassing on their behalf. It was notable that the women who were shadowing councillors/MPs in positions of responsibility (e.g. leader of their party, agent for the local MP) seemed to have the most varied and rewarding experiences.

Most importantly, five of the nine had been selected as prospective councillors or in one case, as a prospective MP, and in the weeks leading up to the election they were campaigning on their own behalf.

Some of the women were actively using a virtual mentor organised by OBV and in one case, they had actually met up for a long discussion. In others, this was not happening, either because they did not have a virtual mentor at that time or because they had not been in touch with the mentor/ the mentor had not responded. Most of the respondents had attended the induction/launch event and had taken part in the national leadership seminar.

Many women were in touch with, or had talked at the induction/launch event and training seminar to other women on the programme and were aware of how their experiences compared with, and often differed from, their own.

6.3 Impacts

6.3.1 Knowledge and understanding about becoming a councillor

The shadowing and mentoring programme set out to increase levels of knowledge about what it meant to be a councillor and the results of the tracking survey demonstrated a statistically significant increase in such understanding in several specific areas when measures taken before and after embarking on the programme were compared. The figures in brackets indicate the increase in the percentage of respondents who felt they had a 'very good' understanding of each area; more detail is provided at section A.2.4.

There was a **statistically significant increased understanding** of:

- what a councillor does (+44%)
- the skills and qualities needed to be a councillor (+43%)
- the steps that one needs to go through to become a councillor (+43%)
- how to approach a political party (+24%).

Although the findings showed improved understanding of other aspects of becoming a councillor, the increases were not statistically significant. These were:

- how appointments are made to the Executive and to Council committees (+14%)
- how decisions are made by Councils (+13%)

- what the different parties stand for (+10%)
- what it means to stand as an independent candidate (+6%).

In addition, a single 'knowledge score' was computed for each woman based on her understanding across the eight areas. Looking at the proportion of the women who attained a score above the mid-point of the possible range, this increased significantly between the first and second waves of the survey for those on the shadowing and mentoring programme. By the second wave, 90% were achieving a score in the upper half of the range; a third more women than at the first wave (57%). Taken together, these findings confirm that the women taking part in the shadowing and mentoring programme, and who responded to the survey, demonstrated **a statistically significant improvement in their understanding of what it means to be a councillor.**

Some of the experiences of the women who were interviewed in greater depth backed up these findings when they described what they had taken out of the programme. From hearing people speak at the launch event and from shadowing councillors, they were exposed to the hard work that went into being a successful councillor and the skills and personal qualities that were needed.

“The amount of meetings I went to one week was exhausting. From morning to night, you know? And some meetings last for two hours, some for an hour, and then you’ve got surgeries to talk to people, or you are going to meet up at your local constituency and things like that, so your day can be quite full. So it’s not like it’s going to be a doddle. The pay on the other hand isn’t like as good as a normal job, so it’s got to be because you really want to help people. You know, feel strongly about your community, and you want to do something to help. Now, if you are money orientated it’s not going to be for you. You know, and that’s something I realised that it’s really for people who have a passion to help people, and that’s what it’s all about.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

“And seeing the way xxx works, makes me think this is an ideal role model for me. Seeing the way she’s in there, she knows the names of the people in her ward, calls them by name, by first name, it’s really good.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

They had also learned more about the technicalities of the selection process and how they could position themselves to increase their chances of being selected.

“So I have learned a lot from hanging out with her, and what they are looking for in a candidate, and when they are going to put people forward, and stuff like that. So I’ve learned quite a lot from her, so I owe OBV a great gratitude for that. I really do. My eyes have been opened.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

“You don’t understand the technicalities. You think ‘hey, I’m going to stand as a councillor’ and you don’t understand the technicalities involved leading up to that. So that has been an eye opener.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

The difficult and unsupported position of independent councillors became obvious to some of the women (not just those who were shadowing independents) with the consequence that they were unable to offer a rich experience of life as a councillor. Both women who were shadowing independents had also found other councillors unhelpful and even antagonistic.

“Independent is not supported and I believe they are not looked at favourably. I can see this from the councillor I am shadowing. The way people perceive him is the way people perceive me. So it is actually having negative effects on the amount of experience I am getting from the whole scheme. It is all about the political positioning of being an independent.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

“I’ve networked with other members and they’re finding it quite difficult... I think they’re getting the understanding that politics is not all skipping around the maypole. People who are on the scheme who chose to be independent or with a party where there aren’t that many councillors, are finding it harder so this has to be looked at because what you don’t want to do is lose these people’s interest.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

6.3.2 Change in attitudes

The tracking survey looked at how women’s attitudes to becoming a councillor and specifically, to the things that might motivate and deter them from this goal, changed over time. This was achieved by finding out the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements derived from the qualitative feedback from the events.

Of the 12 statements with which the women were asked to agree or disagree (to varying levels), there were **statistically significant changes** on two for the women who had taken part in the shadowing and mentoring programme. These were as follows (see A.2.5 for details):

- as a woman, I am concerned that I may not get the support of my local community (an increase of 27% in those **disagreeing** with this statement)
- I am concerned that other councillors may not be welcoming (an increase of 25% in those **disagreeing** with this statement).

There were smaller changes in a **positive** direction on all the other statements (though these were not statistically significant) except for one – I’m not sure I can commit the time to be an effective councillor – where the proportion agreeing with this statement went up from 26% to 38%.

As with the ‘knowledge score’, a single ‘attitude score’ was calculated for each woman based on her responses across all 12 attitude statements. As described at A.2.5, the women who had taken part in the shadowing and mentoring programme showed a **statistically significant improvement in their overall attitude scores.**

6.3.3 How helpful the programme was felt to have been

Twelve of the women who responded to the second wave survey had done enough on the programme to give an assessment of how helpful they had found it; the majority (8 of the 12) found it very helpful.

Those who were most positive focused on what the programme had revealed to them about the support for BAME women, the process that one needs to follow, the positive effects of community working, and on the quality of experience it had given them. One woman commented that the programme had given her access to councillors that had previously been denied.

“Awakening to the process. Provided a good idea of what was needed.” (Second wave survey response)

“To see the support that’s out there. Encouragement for BME (sic) women to go forward is brilliant.” (Second wave survey response)

“Insight and accessibility and user friendly.” (Second wave survey response)

“It’s really helped me to gain experience with a professional that is in the role already.” (Second wave survey response)

“Opportunity to do something. Councillor shadowing was excellent. Given me real life experience of what I want to do.” (Second wave survey response)

A few women were very positive about the quality of support they had received from their councillor, feeling that she/he had addressed any questions she had, had been very active in introducing her to people and generally, had been very helpful.

From comments made by those who were less positive about the programme and indeed, from some of the comments from those who were very pleased with it, two main

areas were identified for enhancement of the programme; the first of these is in identifying the right councillors, briefing them well and ensuring that they are fully on board and able to give the support. The second is supplementing the experience with more training sessions.

The experiences of the nine women who were interviewed by telephone, were similar to those described above and reinforced the areas where it was felt that improvements might be made. Most had had very positive experiences because they had found 'their own' and/or other councillors receptive and interested in what they were doing. They had often networked beyond their immediate contact and established a number of mutually beneficial relationships; people whom they were helping and who could support them.

For those who were disappointed in some way, this was attributed to not having a councillor that they could shadow locally or a perceived disinterest on the part of 'their' councillor. This might have been expressed in a lack of response from the councillor (to emails) or in the fact that the councillor seemed to have little idea of what was expected of him/her; in one case they simply provided a list of meetings, in another, not even this seemed to have been forthcoming.

"I really pushed my councillor and instigated a lot of things. I don't think he is interested in my political career at all. I didn't find him supportive... I had to ask him about all the events. He didn't offer me anything. I really got upset about it."
(Telephone interview with shadow)

A couple of the women felt that more effort could have been put into finding a suitable councillor for them to shadow in terms of having interests that matched their own or with whom they could get along (in one case, it was felt that concerns voiced about being paired with a particular councillor had not been addressed).

"It is like a marriage where you like someone to work with and that kind of thing, they need to have that kind of relationship." (Telephone interview with shadow)

However, these criticisms are balanced by some very positive comments about the ongoing support offered by OBV, for example, in helping some of the women tailor the scheme to their own needs as in shadowing an MP rather than a councillor, and in concentrating the shadowing within a short period to suit job commitments.

It was notable that regardless of the experience the women had had, they often said that they had made the best of the situation by dint of their personality and that determination was a quality required by anyone entering politics. When asked what advice they would give to someone embarking on the scheme, persistence, enthusiasm and hard work were recurring themes.

“Make the most of the opportunity. Don’t just sit back, you need to network, email, attend events, get involved with the local party. No one will chase you so get out there. At the beginning, turn up for everything because you don’t know what you’re going to be interested in – you can be selective later.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

It was clear that the women had embarked on the shadowing programme from different starting points with respect to a political career. Some of the older women had decided that participating in a political arena and being able to set the strategic direction was the only way that they could have influence in areas that they knew about. Some, often younger women, had less specific motivation and often a longer term ambition to become either a councillor or an MP. For the more focused, the shadowing programme was seen as **offering a structure that would enable them to fill in the gaps in their knowledge about the political process** and a discipline that would enable them to progress their ambitions. Rather than just thinking about the possibility of entering public life, it would provide a pathway for action and hopefully, support in moving along this pathway.

“What the OBV scheme has done is give you a disciplined structure on how to move yourself forward. A lot of people aren’t actively involved in politics so it gives you a structure and that leads you into what to do next, like if you need to join your local party – it shows you how to go about it.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

For the less immediately ambitious, it was perceived that the programme would offer them the opportunity to observe the life of a councillor, see how they manage their time, and decide if the role was one that would suit them.

“My expectation of the programme was that I would learn everything that a councillor does. It was almost like a fly on the wall. That is what I expected. In terms of content I was expecting to know who they’re interacting with on a daily basis, about their networks, what campaigns are they interested in, how do they get the work done - all those kind of issues.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

“I didn’t have any expectations. I was like a blank sheet ... I’m just going to go in and see what happens, I had no idea. All I knew I was going to shadow somebody, do a bit of write up, six days or whatever during the course. That was

it, eyes wide open. I didn't want to have no romantic ideas what's going to happen." (Telephone interview with shadow)

"What did you expect to get out of the scheme?"

Well, really just a bit more support. I suppose a different angle to it. I went into it on my own back. It was to see, from the scheme, if I wasn't to have gone on my own back, what would happen, and also get a bit more one-to-one." (Telephone interview with shadow)

While one woman spoke at length of the insights that her shadowing experience had given her into the life of a councillor and how to be a successful councillor and others spoke of what they had learned about the political process, the main way in which the programme seemed to have helped the majority who were actively pursuing their goal was by providing **a springboard for their political ambitions**. Being accepted on to the scheme validated their interest and ambition and allowed them to draw on the credibility of OBV. It gave them confidence to push themselves forward and provided a way in. Several made the comment that while they intended to pursue their ambition regardless of the help from OBV, they were grateful for it.

"I was actively going for it anyway, but me going on the OBV programme, I have been able to meet people, and people that are going for it and I know that there's people that I can phone or speak to. I met a lot of different contacts through going to some of the events and OBV, so I'd say, even though I was going for it anyway, I can't take away from the fact that OBV has been helpful in helping me achieve my goals." (Telephone interview with shadow)

"I am that kind of person that once I decide I want something, I go for it. I have converted the shadowing into part of my networking and activism to get my name on the approved list." (Telephone interview with shadow)

"When I'm talking to people about what I'm doing, I start by telling them that I'm actually on a 'shadowing a councillor scheme' with OBV and I think that gives me some credibility." (Telephone interview with shadow)

Even those who had not been selected to stand at this election and were looking to the future for their opportunity, felt that the programme had put them on the first rung of the ladder.

"If it wasn't for OBV, I would never have got my foot onto the ladder... Now I know what to expect, now I know what's expected of me and you know, OBV have put me on the ladder. It's a climb up to where I need to go." (Telephone interview with shadow)

Some felt that the programme should provide women with the technical information that they need to understand the political process and there was a feeling that this was

rather hit and miss; they did not perceive that it was provided as part of the scheme so it depended on whether it was provided by the councillor they were shadowing or their mentor.

“Everyone needs to be aware that the procedures you need to follow – I went to a candidate’s evening for the Labour Party. They talked about the long campaign and the short campaign, what forms you need to use, what you can do, what you can’t do, postal voting – all these things that you’re unaware of. You just think you’re going to turn up and put your name on the ballot.”
(Telephone interview with shadow)

“You can’t just turn up, sit down with your feet up... You can’t just go and see a meeting, you have to be invited in... I had guest tickets because my mentor is the Labour whip so I was really quite lucky that I was able to meet everyone and he exposed me at a very early stage and the other councillors were very helpful as well.” (Telephone interview with shadow)

One woman described what she had learned from a workshop run by her political party about the specifics she needed to know as a candidate which she had found very helpful. It covered areas such as canvassing, attending fundraisers, volunteering to become an activist, how to apply to be on the approved list, practical advice on how to use informal campaign activity and non-work related experience to pursue a political role. It gave practical insights about local parties and how they operate, and practical steps for how best to present oneself.

The national leadership seminar run by OBV was, for most, very useful, and there was a general feeling that more training along these lines could have been extremely beneficial. The highlights were the training in how to handle the media and the insights about the use of new media. There was some feeling that the time taken up by presentations at the beginning could have usefully been used in more practical sessions. The session on ‘how to become a councillor’ was not mentioned except by one woman who felt that this should have been covered earlier rather than mid-way through the programme.

6.3.4 Intention to become a councillor

Before setting out on the shadowing and mentoring programme, 65% (n=24) of the women who responded to the first wave of the tracking survey, said they had decided that they definitely wanted to become a councillor or MP; at the time of second wave four months later, this had risen to 75% (n=15) although the increase is not statistically significant (see A.2.6 for more detail).

The women were also asked about the steps they had taken towards achieving their ambition and not surprisingly, those on the shadowing and mentoring programme had done more by the time of the second wave than other women who were not on the scheme. While one would expect them to have had more communications with councillors and attended council meetings, it is notable that they were also more likely to have contacted or joined a local party and/or contacted someone in the central office of a political party (see A.2.6 for more detail).

Of the women on the shadowing and mentoring programme who responded to the second wave of the tracking survey or who were interviewed in depth, a total of 29 women, eleven had put themselves forward as a prospective candidate, nine had been shortlisted and seven had been selected to stand as a councillor or, in one case, as a Parliamentary candidate. Three were elected as councillors on May 6 2010 (see Box 9). OBV have indicated that the proportion of about a quarter standing for office is reflected in the full cohort of 60 women – 14 women stood at the election and four were elected.

Box 9: Details of the three women taking part in the shadowing and mentoring scheme who were elected as councillors in the 2010 local elections

Name	Ward	Party
Judith Best	Streatham South, Lambeth	Lib Dem
Sheila D’Souza	Bryanston and Dorset Square	Conservative
Margaret McLennan	Northwick Park, Brent	Labour

One of the successful ‘graduates’ from the shadowing and mentoring programme describes her journey while another looks forward to the task ahead (see Boxes 10 and 11).

Box 10: A recently elected councillor describes her ‘journey’

The Taskforce played an important role as my participation at one of its Workshops (in Camden Town Hall in April 2009) led directly to my decision to become politically active and enter public service. After that, several Westminster councillors (who I knew through my NHS work) very kindly started mentoring me even before I started the official OBV Shadowing Programme with Councillor In addition to showing me what the work involves, they gave me valuable practical advice about how to get myself known in the wards and get onto the Approved List of candidates. I want to acknowledge their support, and that of Mimi Harker, that wonderfully enthusiastic member of the Taskforce, who generously shared with me many tips and pointers to help me prepare for the Selection Panel.

It all happened so quickly. I attended the OBV Workshop in April last year, joined the Conservative

Party in June, got selected in March 2010 and elected in May. I am now very mindful of the responsibility I bear and am determined to represent the needs and priorities of my local community in the difficult decisions that will confront local authorities in our present economic circumstances.

Sheila d'Souza

Box 11: A recently elected councillor describes the task ahead

It is a deeply humbling experience to have been selected to serve the residents of Northwick Park; particularly as I replaced the previous Councillor who had worked so hard and achieved so much for residents. It is an extremely hard act to follow, but I promise that I will do my utmost to repay the trust invested in me by ensuring all residents have access to services at the right time and securing these when most needed.

Margaret McLennan

Only three women who responded to the survey or who were interviewed had decided that a role as a councillor was not for them; one was focusing on her recent career move although she thought she might think about public life at a later date; the others were contemplating whether a role other than councillor would suit them better. They were however grateful for the networking opportunities the scheme had given them; one woman described making 'unbelievable contacts'. A small number were still undecided and this essentially came down to concerns about the time commitment required, the fear of rejection and of media intrusion. All of these women were open to the possibility of pursuing a role in public life at some point.

For the majority however, their resolve had been strengthened in terms of becoming a councillor or standing for Parliament.

"I want to represent my community because that representation is lacking and I also want to encourage more BME people to be politically aware, particularly women." (Second wave survey response)

"I want to be a voice in the community... I want to be part of the change in this country and be a voice for my brothers and sisters who need to be heard and represented." (Second wave survey response)

"Want to be part of what goes on locally – can put ideas forward and can help people." (Second wave survey response)

6.4 The Councillors' View

Four telephone discussions were conducted with, and five completed questionnaires and one short email reply were received from, councillors who had been shadowed by one of the women or who acted as mentors. The range of activities in which they had involved the women reflected that described by the women themselves; attending

scrutiny panels, council and cabinet meetings, various ward meetings (ward tasking meeting, ward committee meeting, neighbourhood meeting), events and surgeries, 'protesting', campaigning, 'door knocking', 'leafleting in the rain', attending party meetings. Councillors talked of having had 'long chats' with their shadows, providing briefings and tours. They might have introduced them to colleagues, sometimes arranging for them to shadow another councillor to give a different perspective. In one case, the shadow had been selected to run for a ward and the councillor was giving his support and encouraging people to vote for her.

All were pleased to have been asked to take part in the programme and would be ready to do so again. They were supportive of the aims of the initiative and felt that the programme of work put together by the Taskforce demonstrated that the issue of underrepresentation was being taken seriously.

"It was a scheme that I wouldn't necessarily have been aware of if I hadn't taken part in it. It's just good to see, and I do think we need to encourage more diversity within the council. I think in xxx, we do pretty well anyway, but I don't think you can rest on your laurels. It's been good to see that there are attempts being made by the government to broaden that, some real positive things. There's been some quite high profile speakers and that's given it real credibility, it's not just been something that's thought like lip service at all, it's been really well planned, and I think something that's having quite a high profile makes the people doing it feel valued." (Telephone interview with councillor)

"I learnt about it through getting an email or a letter about it at one point, just asking, 'would I participate?' And it seemed to me a good opportunity, because, in common with all political parties, we probably don't reflect very well the ethnic minority population. At the present moment in time, we have no ethnic minority councillors of any political party in xxx." (Telephone interview with councillor)

"A desire to attract more BME women into politics at all levels. I believe it is imperative to have candidates who are representative of the electorate." (Telephone interview with councillor)

Apart from the desire to help increase the representation of BAME women, the councillors identified other things that they hoped to gain themselves from taking part. These included a better understanding of the barriers to BAME women, the satisfaction of helping someone else to become involved, personal affirmation of the reasons for becoming a councillor and the opportunity to be explicit about aspects of local government that they had over time, taken as read. Apart from providing their shadows with a better understanding of the political process and the role of a councillor, they hoped to have shown that local government was not as boring as some might think.

On a number of occasions in discussions with the councillors, the issue of the time pressures they were under was raised in terms of fitting in their council duties with their other work and family commitments. This meant that the councillors were sometimes unsure whether they had been able to give as much time to the programme as wanted by the women. It also meant that it was important for them to know what was expected of them so that they could make the most of the time they had. Three councillors expressed uncertainty about the role they were expected to play in the context of the scheme and felt that they would have preferred a more personal briefing.²⁴ This had been done by email whereas they would have welcomed a telephone discussion. Moreover, communication was not always directly with the councillor in question.

“I’ve had no communication from them at all, I don’t think, directly. I haven’t had an email, I haven’t had any guidance whatsoever from them ... Eventually I was given this letter that had come from the OBV people - ‘would somebody be prepared to be involved with us?’ And that is the only communication I’ve had from them, which wasn’t to me in fact, it went to the office.” (Telephone interview with councillor)

“Has there been anything that you felt that you could have had more help with?”

I think maybe more information about it at the beginning. I did get an email, but I realise it’s the first one and I think that people do try their best at the beginning, but I think I probably would have liked a chat about what it meant. I think that was maybe offered, I don’t know, maybe it was²⁵. I was on holiday in December and I was very busy ... I think in that respect it would have been nice to talk to someone who really knew what it was all about, what was expected.” (Telephone interview with councillor)

“It might have been helpful to have maybe just a little bit more about what’s expected, what you would hope they would get out of it. But in general, it seemed to work well.” (Telephone interview with councillor)

The requirements and expectations of the women themselves were sometimes felt to be unclear and some councillors were unsure that the women had been briefed adequately. Sometimes it seemed that their shadows were hoping that the councillors would deliver something different e.g. have a common area of interest. It was

²⁴ We understand from OBV that most participating councillors attended the induction and launch event and would therefore have received a face to face briefing. Communication with councillors proved difficult for OBV (as for ourselves) and often slow. Sometimes communications were directed through Member Services and telephone contact with all councillors would have proven prohibitively time consuming and demanding of the councillors’ time. OBV therefore relied on email updates to councillors with phone calls if requested or if the women shadows notified them of difficulties.

²⁵ OBV confirm that this was offered

suggested that information about when the programme was due to finish and what needed to be accomplished by then would have been helpful from the outset. Also, that it might have helped if the women had been given a sense of the demands on their councillor so that they had a better understanding of how they might get the most out of the opportunity.

“I said to her, ‘have you got criteria you’ve got to fulfil? What have you been told you’ve got to do?’ and she eventually sent me an email of something she’d been sent and it was very sketchy. I was amazed at the lack of stuff she’d been sent. It was about four lines, ‘you should spend a half day doing this, and you should spend at least three hours doing that’. It was very sketchy. I felt she wasn’t getting any support from them at all, but then she may have had other stuff from them, I don’t know.” (Telephone interview with councillor)

“Because of misunderstandings going on, she thinks something and I thought something else. It would just be better if we all knew where we stood really. I feel that xxx at one point got this email saying she should have done all these things and she said to me, ‘oh my goodness, when’s your next meeting. I’m going to have to come to a meeting because I haven’t done enough meetings’. I said, ‘it’s not about going to meetings, it’s about other stuff’. Clarity is always good, isn’t it? I think it would help everybody involved if they knew what they were supposed to be doing.” (Telephone interview with councillor)

One suggestion to help councillors appreciate what might be expected of them was to tell them how other councillors were faring with their shadows and the things they were doing with them from which others could learn.

“It would have been quite good to possibly have got some feedback, just overall, as to how the scheme seemed to be working out, and in fact whether there was anything that was happening. Somebody shadowing in another council perhaps, getting opportunities that we didn’t think of giving.” (Telephone interview with councillor)

Other occasional observations were:

- there seemed to be some misunderstanding about the different roles to be played by the councillor being shadowed and the virtual mentor and that these could usefully be clarified for all concerned
- some of the shadows had little idea of the process of selection or the value of helping others with their campaigns and of standing for unwinnable seats – this observation might have implications not just for training but again, for managing expectations about the extent to which shadowed councillors also perform a mentoring role

“I think it’s not just about the experience, I think it’s the opportunity to talk to people about how you get into it. I was telling her how I came to be a councillor and a cabinet member, and I’ve introduced her to a number of people as well who are able to give her information such as the chair of the local government committee in the Labour party because he’s able to tell her the process of how to get on to the panel, which is obviously essential because if you can’t get on to the panel, you can’t get on to the council. So I think it’s about learning, not just shadowing as such, it’s about learning what the processes are, and how you get through to certain positions.” (Telephone interview with councillor)

“Sometimes people don’t know anything about campaigning and are embarrassed about putting themselves forward, and so very often it can be quite useful to go and help with someone else’s campaign before you do your own. And be willing to be what they loosely term a paper candidate in somewhere that’s not going to, where you might not win the first time.” (Telephone interview with councillor)

Finally, there was some feeling that it might have been beneficial to have started the scheme earlier in the council cycle so that the women had time to settle in before candidates were selected. At least some of the women who stood for election had to gain dispensation because they had not been party members for the required period and a couple of women felt their councillors were preoccupied by the impending election. However, the election gave many of the women the opportunity to get involved in politics at a very active and exciting time and moreover, gave some of them the opportunity and impetus to stand for office in a very short time.

6.5 Learning Points

The fact that a quarter of the women who started out on the shadowing and mentoring scheme stood for election and that the majority are still set on achieving a role in public life attests to its success. The delivery of the shadowing and mentoring scheme presented its own challenges and therefore this outcome is particularly pleasing – OBV had itself not expected any of the women to stand in the 2010 elections; their goal was the 2011 elections. Not all the women on the scheme were involved in this research and only a small proportion of the councillors involved with it were spoken to. However, based on the available research findings, there are some suggestions for learning points that might be taken forward. Some of these (such as further training sessions) were considered at the outset but the scheme was constrained by budgetary limits. These may therefore be helpful points to consider for others looking to develop such schemes in the future and making the case for further funding.

- It was clear from the outreach events how much was gained by the women from the realisation that there was a group of women who felt as they did, who had similar goals and who wanted to support each other in achieving them. For those participating in the shadowing and mentoring programme, the effect was even more striking – as a cohort of women on the same journey, they were able to derive great encouragement, inspiration and support from each other. One spoke of the effect that hearing other women’s stories of selection at the national leadership seminar had had on her.

“The second meeting was a contrast, because a lot of the women were being selected. The reality hit me. It is possible, it’s not a dream any more. And these people, they are telling their story of how they are knocking on doors, how they are out there in the rain. They are actually saying ‘I’ve done this’ so have started doing the hard work. They have ... they are working in a team with other people knocking on doors, and talking to people and how hard they are working.”
(Telephone interview with shadow)

This has implications for how the cohort-effect is harnessed so that the women can continue to provide that support to each other after they ‘graduate’ from the scheme. OBV is continuing to keep in touch with and support the women as alumni of the programme through personal contact, its website and new media. The desire was expressed for the circulation of a full email address list, for example, and this might be useful to help clusters of women network and meet up on a regional basis now that the formal programme has come to an end.

- This evaluation has shown the importance of the councillor/shadow relationship in ensuring that the experience for both parties is a rich and rewarding one. One of the challenges facing OBV was the need to expand the programme from the original 16 local authority areas to over 50 areas and therefore to spread their efforts far more widely within the same budget; they were also initially advised to approach councillors through members’ services making the process of recruitment lengthier. Clearly, councillors are very busy people and often difficult to contact, but given the importance of the councillor/shadow relationship, it is suggested that if future programmes are to be run on a national scale in the same way, then there is a need to build in the time and resources to ensure:

- councillors are keen to be involved (rather than simply agreeing to have their name put forward) and understand the commitment that they will need to give to the scheme
- that they are briefed personally, either face to face (at an induction meeting) or by telephone about what is expected of them (in terms of both offering shadowing opportunities and mentoring) and where they can turn for support.

While mentoring programmes are offered as part of many initiatives, it cannot be assumed that all councillors have played this role before or know what being an effective mentor means and therefore might appreciate some help with this.

- One of the women suggested that it would be helpful to have a more formal checklist of things that shadows/councillors are expected to do/achieve during the scheme and while this may sound over-prescriptive, it would seem to be one way of ensuring that both parties have the same understanding and that progress becomes more explicit. However, it is also important that, just as some of the most active women advised, shadows should be encouraged to look beyond the suggested activities, taking advantage of any opportunities offered and seeking out others.
- Given the difficulties encountered by those who were shadowing independent councillors, consideration should perhaps be given to how their expectations are managed. Perhaps women who feel they would prefer to stand as an independent might be offered the opportunity to shadow both an independent councillor and one with party affiliations.
- The research revealed that while the shadowing and mentoring programme led to an increase in levels of knowledge, the informality of the arrangement means that knowledge gaps may not be filled. Consideration might therefore be given to how this is addressed, either in additional training seminars or making it explicitly part of the councillor's role.
- There is a desire among the scheme participants for more opportunities for women to supplement their experience 'in the field' with sessions, possibly run

regionally. While this might be an ideal way of providing supplementary technical detail as well as being an opportunity for the women to ask questions, acquire new skills or simply derive support from each other, it clearly has resource implications. An online resource providing information on all aspects of becoming a councillor with an interactive component for discussing topics, posing questions (possibly moderated by experienced councillors) and generally networking, might be usefully established as an alternative.

7 Community Leadership Course

Box 12: Headline impacts of the community leadership course

- Just over half of the women funded to take the course completed it
- The community leadership course led to a statistically significant improvement in the women's understanding of what a councillor does and how decisions are made by councils
- Women who had taken the course showed a statistically significant improvement in their overall 'knowledge' scores as measured on eight statements about becoming a councillor.

7.1 Introduction

The First Certificate in Community Leadership is a modular online learning package that is also available in hard copy on request. It covers the principles of community leadership, the local government environment, and the skills and qualities of an effective councillor. It is the first step of a foundation programme that looks at all aspects of council services, working with communities and at how local government is organised.

Women who wanted to take their ambitions further but who did not live in an area where the shadowing and mentoring programme was being offered, were encouraged to apply for the course. Women who were unsuccessful in their application to the shadowing and mentoring were also asked if they wished to be funded instead to participate in the course. A total of 50 women were offered and accepted a place on the course.

The evaluation of the course took the form of the tracking survey pre- and post-participation and a small number of more in-depth interviews with women who had completed the course.

The key impacts of the community leadership courses are highlighted in Box 12.

7.2 The Course

In the five months or so that was provided in which the women could complete the course, 26 women (52%) did so and received their certificate. Four started the course but did not complete it and 20 did not begin it.

Just over half (52%, n=26) of the 50 women who were invited to take the community leadership course responded to the second wave of the tracking survey. At that time, 19 (73%) had completed the course. Two of the remaining seven women had started the course but were unable to finish it. The other five had not started the course. Where the women have given some explanation for their failure to complete or begin the course, it can be seen that this is primarily attributed to a change in personal circumstances, an issue with technology or a mismatch in expectations of the course.

One woman had been unable to complete the course because she had lost the emails with contact details and so was unable to contact anyone to continue the process, and in the other case, a change in work commitments meant that the woman no longer had the time or money to continue (this was presumably not just with the course, which was free, but with pursuing any ambition to become a councillor). The reasons given for not starting the course at all were varied; one woman had been unable to access it online and seems not to have been told about a paper version being available (she would still like to do it); another was applying to be a magistrate and thought she could not do both; another had been deterred from going into politics after attending a meeting at the House of Commons (possibly the launch of the programme) where she felt that people were only interested in attracting attention to themselves. Finally, a woman had expected to find out about workshops and despite sending emails, had not received any information. This issue of expectations about how the course is to be delivered is followed up in the following sections.

7.3 How Helpful the Course has been

Of the 19 women who had completed the course, eight had found it 'very helpful', seven found it 'somewhat helpful' and four 'not especially helpful'. Those who were very positive about the course focused on the value of its content, describing it variously as:

"Clear, concise material with good examples." (Second wave survey response)

"Very informative about what is required." (Second wave survey response)

"Very detailed. Explained exactly what becoming a councillor meant." (Second wave survey response)

A couple talked in terms of the effect of the course:

"Better understanding of the process." (Second wave survey response)

“It enlightened me on what being a councillor/MP involves.” (Second wave survey response)

One woman appreciated how it had reinforced some of the things she had been doing in community work. Another woman, when interviewed in greater depth, suggested that, given the diversity of communities and the importance of councillors being able to represent all communities, not just their own, the first module should perhaps have addressed this.

“You don’t necessarily have to come from that community but you need to be aware of the community you represent....perhaps module 1 should have been ‘understanding your community.’” (Telephone interview with course participant)

Another suggested that it would also be useful to have more information on the election process and what happens before and afterwards.

Those who were less enthusiastic and had found the course ‘somewhat helpful’, felt that it had delivered some background information but this was broad, just an outline and ‘*on a theoretical level*’. There was only one comment about the multiple choice format and how this made you ‘lazy’. Where the course was mainly felt to fall down was in the lack of a practical element and the opportunity to get together with others and learn from them. This was also the chief criticism of those who found the course ‘not especially helpful’.

When asked about improvements that could be made, the principal call was for some means of introducing a ‘hands-on’ element, such as mentoring, meetings with a councillor, practical experience, an event, contact with others on the course either face to face; one suggestion was a forum (presumably online). Given that many of the women on the course would have applied for and not been accepted onto the shadowing and mentoring programme or would not have been located in an area where the programme was offered, this is hardly surprising. Essentially, they were seeking the experience that they knew existed but that they had missed out on. Indeed, a couple seemed to have an expectation of participating in a ‘National Leadership Training Day’ (*sic*) or a meeting for those on the course or workshops; they were disappointed that these had not taken place.

Another suggestion was that it would be helpful to be told what was the next step in the training or development process in becoming a councillor.

Four women who had completed the community leadership course were interviewed by telephone. They represented a mixed picture in terms of their views on the scheme. Three of the four were very happy to have been directed to the course rather than taking part in the shadowing programme and understood why that decision had been taken (one had already done another shadowing programme). They saw it as an opportunity to get a lot of useful background information and learn something new, possibly as a first step. As with others who had responded to the survey, these women felt the modules were well structured, interesting and were easy to follow.

“I felt that this would be better than the shadowing scheme because it gives you an understanding of the process. You learn the theory and how things should be done. How things are done in practice could be different to how it should be done - so in that respect, I felt it was better to do the Solace training.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

“I found that it was a better idea to do the Solace because it gives you a background of the role and explains what the responsibilities are. It was very detailed and informative. For me, this was most relevant and made a lot of sense. When you do the shadowing, you get to see first hand what the councillors do but you don't get to know what the background and how the cabinet works.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

“It flowed nicely in terms of introducing the whole structure, the team and the individual role.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

The fourth woman however, was very disappointed not to have been accepted onto the shadowing programme and saw the course as a ‘*consolation prize*’. She had not appreciated that the course was online rather than classroom based and although it told her some things she did not know, she felt it could be completed too quickly, in her case in just two hours. This meant that several weeks later, she had retained very little. Her suggestion was that it would have been better if the course had been paced so that each module was made available at intervals, possibly with some support such as the facility to ask questions.

“It's not what I expected. For one, I didn't know it was an online course and secondly, most online courses last a couple of months at least whereas this one you could do in a couple of hours. So in terms of the format, that was quite interesting and not what I'm used to. Saying that, it was informative – even though I work for local government, some of it was new... the format didn't blow me away but the information was useful... I did the whole thing within an hour.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

Despite the positive response of most of the women who were interviewed, they, like many of those responding to the survey, saw the course as a preliminary step. They

suggested it should be followed up, for those who successfully completed it and who were still interested, by the shadowing and mentoring programme.

Also, like the survey respondents, they would have appreciated an opportunity to interface with other participants/course providers, either face to face or electronically.

“This would give us a chance to meet others, share our experience and support each other. People in the shadowing scheme have had the chance to meet so the Solace scheme should also do the same.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

7.4 Impacts

7.4.1 Knowledge and understanding about becoming a councillor

The tracking survey demonstrated a **statistically significant increase in understanding** in two specific areas when measures taken before and after embarking on the course were compared. The figures in brackets indicate the increase in the percentage of the women who felt they had a ‘very good’ understanding of each area; more detail is provided at A.2.4.

There was increased understanding of:

- how decisions are made by councils (+23%)
- what a councillor does (+21%).

The women who were interviewed by telephone reinforced these findings when they said that the course had brought home to them the amount of work that councillors have to do and provided them with a picture of how councillors fit into the decision making process.

“I know now what I would be getting into if I was to become a councillor in times of the time commitment as opposed to just having an idea about it. I know now what is really involved. It tells me what type of time and financial commitment I need.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

Although the findings showed greater understanding of other aspects of becoming a councillor, the increases were not statistically significant. These were:

- how to approach a political party (+20%)
- what it means to stand as an independent candidate (+19%)

- how appointments are made to the Executive and to Council committees (+19%)
- the skills and qualities needed to become a councillor (+17%)
- what the different parties stand for (+13%)
- the steps I need to go through to become a councillor (+12%).

In addition, a single 'knowledge score' was computed for each woman based on her understanding across the eight areas. Looking at the proportion of the women who attained a score above the mid-point of the possible range, this **increased significantly** between the first and second waves of the survey for those who took the course. By the second wave, 86% (19 out of 22) were achieving a score in the upper half of the range; this compares with 29% (8 out of 28) at the first wave. Thus, although the women on the programme demonstrated fewer significant improvements in terms of the individual aspects of becoming a councillor, nevertheless, when taken across all eight statements, the improvement in their scores was statistically significant.

7.4.2 Change in attitudes

The tracking survey looked at how women's attitudes to becoming a councillor and specifically, to the things that might motivate and deter them from this goal, changed over time. Of the 12 statements with which the women were asked to agree or disagree (to varying degrees), there were no significant changes for the women who had taken part in the community leadership course. Overall, there was movement in a positive direction on the single 'attitude score' but again this was not significant. In fact, on several of the statements, women felt more negatively after completing the course than before – again, it should be borne in mind that these changes were not significant. More detail is provided at A.2.5.

7.4.3 Changes in intention to become a councillor

Before setting out on the community leadership course, 64% of the women who responded to the first wave of the tracking survey, said they had decided that they definitely wanted to become a councillor or MP; at the time of second wave four months later, the proportion stood at 54% although the decrease is not significant (see A.2.6) for more detail). The proportion still making up their mind was constant at about a third but by the time of the second wave, more women had decided that they no longer wished to become a councillor.

Unfortunately, none of the women who had decided that a role as a councillor was not for them explained the reason for this. However, those who were still making up their minds cited time and financial constraints and the pressure of other commitments, including their current job. There was clearly a perception that they would either have to give up working to be a councillor or could not combine it with another role such as being a magistrate.

Two of the four women who were interviewed in greater depth had decided that becoming a councillor was not something that they wished to pursue immediately. In one case this was because currently, bringing up a family, she now realised that she did not have the time to devote to the role (she might at a later date), and in the other, because she decided she was too young and inexperienced (at 24) to yet be ready for a role in public life.

“I didn’t realise the amount of work that councillors have to do, the range of knowledge they have to have. It’s quite demanding and they may have another job as well. If anything, it put me off a bit... if I wanted to do it as another job - I just wouldn’t be able to because I’m a mum as well... Not like money’s everything but to do all that, without getting paid, it’s too much to do.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

The other two women interviewed had had their ambition confirmed by doing the course even though they too saw it as a longer-term goal. They now understood what their next steps needed to be; these included affiliating themselves with a political party, establishing themselves in the local community (they felt more confident to do this), building networks and possibly taking on a role such as a school governor.

“It’s been brilliant. It has been good. I am really glad I have done it. It has given me a focus and now I have an idea of what direction I need to be going.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

They suggested that it would be useful to have a source of advice and support as they continue on their path.

Looking at what the women who have decided that they still want to be a councillor have done to pursue this goal, the most notable steps forward have been those of three women who completed the course and were shortlisted as potential candidates at the May 2010 elections; two of whom were then selected to stand. The course helped in confirming their desire to do so.

“I realise that women have a lot to bring to the table such as natural skills we possess and, coupled with an understanding of the political process, am sure we can make a big difference in reflecting the community in which we live. For me, understanding the process assisted me in coming to the decision.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

7.5 Learning Points

Looking across the various forms of feedback, the following learning points might be derived about the course:

- There is a need to ensure that women are aware that the course can be completed in hard copy form as well as online
- Underpinning how the course operates; there is a need for good two-way communications in order to manage expectations of the course and to facilitate completion of it. Some of the women clearly felt that they did not receive an adequate response to their queries which possibly undermined completion and satisfaction.

“I don’t know what is happening. I spoke to someone and they said they would get back, but I have still not received any feedback.” (Telephone interview with course participant)

- While not commonly expressed, the question of pacing oneself through the course might be given consideration. There seems to be a temptation for some people to complete the modules in quick succession with the result that they do not have time to assimilate the knowledge. Suggestions that might alleviate this would be:
 - offering participants the option of spreading out the modules so that they become available online or are sent out in hard copy form at set intervals
 - offering other means of encouraging engagement with, and retention of, the information such as a test of their knowledge from across all four modules before completion of the course.
- Some opportunity for networking among the participants might usefully be offered e.g. the opportunity to talk via an online forum preceded ideally, by an initial meeting. An e-forum might also help in pacing participants through the modules and encouraging greater engagement.

Appendices

A.1 Research Method and Response Rates

A programme of research was designed with the intention of providing a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. In the event, the response rate to some of the quantitative elements of the research was low and this has an impact on the analysis and interpretation of the data. The elements of the research are listed below in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of research programme

Stage 1 Research: to evaluate the outreach event programme	
Observation of two events and discussions with attendees before and after	July 2009
Analysis and synthesis of paper-based feedback forms from each event	August 2009
Four focus groups with women who attended one of five events	September 2009
Stage 2 Research: to evaluate the shadowing/mentoring programme and the community leadership course	
Tracking survey in two waves among women attending events and participants in programme and course. The first wave was conducted before the two schemes had started; the second wave was conducted when the participants had either completed the programme/course or were shortly due to do so	October 2009 and March 2010
Telephone interviews with women on the shadowing/mentoring programme	February-March 2010
Telephone interviews with women on the community leadership course	February-March 2010
Telephone interviews with councillors supporting the shadowing/mentoring programme. Councillors were also invited to take part in a short online survey however, the response to this was extremely low.	March 2010
To evaluate the work of the Taskforce	
Mix of 10 face to face and telephone interviews with 'delivery partners' - Taskforce members, strategic partners, political contacts, an event facilitator and GEO staff members	October 2009-January 2010

A.1.1 Stage 1: Event evaluation

Two researchers attended the last two events as observers in order to get a better understanding of what these were like. During the course of the events, informal discussions were held with a cross-section of the women attending.

GEO had designed a short self-completion feedback form which was handed out to attendees at each event. Of the 1082 women attending the events, 569 (53%) completed a feedback form and Creative Research conducted an analysis of the returns.

23 women who had attended one of five of the events took part in four focus groups.

The findings from the self-completion questionnaire have been reported in a previous report: 'BAME Women Councillors' Taskforce: Outreach Event Evaluation' (September 2009). A summary of these findings, along with a summary of the findings from the focus groups were included in the report of the Taskforce: 'Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women Councillors' Taskforce Report' (October 2009).

A.1.2 Stage 2: Evaluation of the shadowing and mentoring programme and the community leadership course

A quantitative survey was conducted in two waves in order to track the progress of the women. An online questionnaire was used although for the second wave this was supplemented with telephone interviews in order to boost the response rate. A paper version of the questionnaire was also available for anyone requesting it.

The first wave commenced in October 2009. The majority of replies were received during October and November although a small number were only received early in the New Year. Email invitations were sent out to three groups of women:

- those who had registered to attend one of the events and had provided an email address (n=1171²⁶)
- women who had been offered a place on the OBV shadowing and mentoring programme; some of these would have also attended one of the events (n=60)

²⁶ Not all those registering actually attended.

- women who had been offered a place on the Solace community leadership course; some of these would also have attended one of the events (n=50).

A total of 119 useable returns were received. Of these:

- 37 (31%) were taking part in the shadowing and mentoring scheme
- 28 (24%) were taking part in the community leadership course
- 54 (45%) had attended an event but were not involved in either follow-up scheme.

The second wave was launched in March 2010. Our main aim was to get feedback from as many of the 110 women as possible taking part in the OBV and Solace schemes. Email invitations were sent to 164 women: the 110 on the two follow-up schemes plus the 54 event attendees who took part in the first wave. Two reminder emails were sent out and both OBV and Solace contacted the women to encourage their participation. Despite this, the response rate was low. In order to increase the response rate, the online survey was supplemented with telephone interviews. Up to three attempts were made to contact the women on the OBV and Solace programmes who had not completed an online survey. It proved impossible to make contact with 52 of the women despite calling at different times and on different days.

A total of 58 returns were analysed. Of these:

- 21 (36%) were taking part in the shadowing and mentoring scheme
- 26 (45%) were taking part in the community leadership course
- 11 (19%) had attended an event but were not involved in either follow-up scheme.

The response rates to the two waves of the survey are summarised in Table 5.

The response rate among the women who attended an event but were not involved in either follow-up scheme can be attributed to the fact that the events were mainly held several months earlier and the email lists used included anyone who attended and

provided their contact details. This is likely to include a proportion who were not seriously considering becoming a councillor.

Table 5: Response rates to the two waves of the survey

		Shadowing and Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only	Total
Wave 1	invites sent	60	50	1171	1281
	replies received	37	28	54	119
	response rate	62%	56%	5%	9%
Wave 2	invites sent	60	50	54	164
	replies received	21	26	11	58
	response rate	35%	52%	20%	35%

The response rate among the women taking part in the two programmes is low, especially since all 110 or so women had agreed to take part in the research when they first signed up to the programmes. The proportion of women undertaking the shadowing and mentoring who responded to the second wave was particularly disappointing. The feedback that was received from those who were interviewed over the telephone suggested it was mainly inertia. Everyone who was contacted by phone was happy to take the time to complete the survey and they indicated that they simply had not got round to completing it online. Other factors that may have had an impact on the response rate include:

- a number of the women were part way through their shadowing and felt that they were not in a position to take part in the survey until such time as they had completed it
- the timing of the survey meant that the general election and local elections were imminent and this may have meant that some of the women were busy, for example, canvassing
- from the attempts made to contact these women it is known that they are difficult to get hold of and they often lead very busy lives.

Whatever the reason for the response rates, the sample sizes are small. This is particularly true when considering the key sub-groups. For this reason:

- the data is mainly presented in the form of raw numbers rather than percentages
- the data should be interpreted qualitatively
- where statistical significance tests have been carried out, non-parametric statistics (chi square test) have been used and where necessary, certain response categories have been collapsed to ensure sufficiently large cell sizes.

In addition to the tracking survey, the aim was to complete ten telephone depth interviews with women on the shadowing and mentoring programme and five with those on the community leadership course. Contact details of 10 women were provided by OBV and 15 by Solace:

- nine telephone depths with women taking part in the shadowing and mentoring programme (only one of these also completed the second wave survey which meant feedback in total from 30 of the 60 women)
- four telephone depths with women taking part in the community leadership course; despite numerous attempts, it proved impossible to make contact with the other eleven women.

In addition to getting feedback from the women taking part in the shadowing and mentoring programme, the views of councillors who were either being shadowed or who were acting as 'virtual mentors' were also important. A short online questionnaire was produced and email invitations were sent out by OBV asking the councillors to provide their feedback. Invitations were sent to 61 'councillor shadows' and 52 'virtual mentors'. In the event, only six replies were received (five from councillors who were being shadowed and one from a virtual mentor). The timing of the survey, which went live in March 2010, was less than ideal given that local government elections were due within a few weeks and the general election was also likely to be called at any moment. This may have been one reason behind the poor response rate; the councillors would, presumably, have been very busy preparing for the elections.

Again, our aim was to supplement the online data with ten telephone depths (five with shadows and five with mentors). Email addresses of ten councillors were provided and an email sent asking them if they would take part in a telephone interview. Five councillors responded; four subsequently took part in a short telephone interview and one other provided some feedback by email.

A.1.3 Taskforce feedback

The final strand of the evaluation involved a number of face to face and telephone interviews with delivery partners. Our aim was to conduct ten interviews and this was achieved. We spoke to:

- 1 GEO staff member
- 3 Taskforce members
- 3 representatives of strategic partners
- 2 political contacts
- 1 event facilitator

A.2 Tracking Survey

A.2.1 Sample profile

- The profile of the two samples is broadly similar. This is only to be expected as a large proportion of the Wave 2 sample also took part in Wave 1.
- The majority of the women were of Black/Black British or Asian/Asian British ethnicity. Black/Black British women were the largest group (see Figure 2).
- There were women of all ages within the sample although the majority were aged between 25 and 54 years old (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: What is your ethnic group?

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

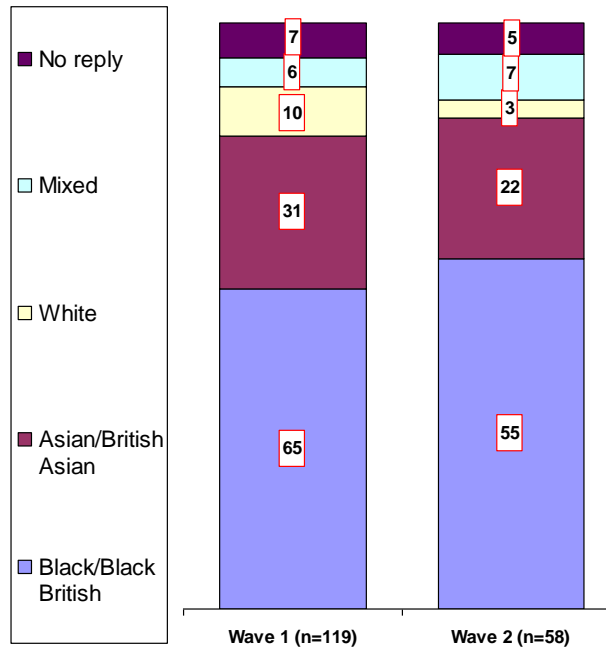


Figure 3: What is your age range?

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

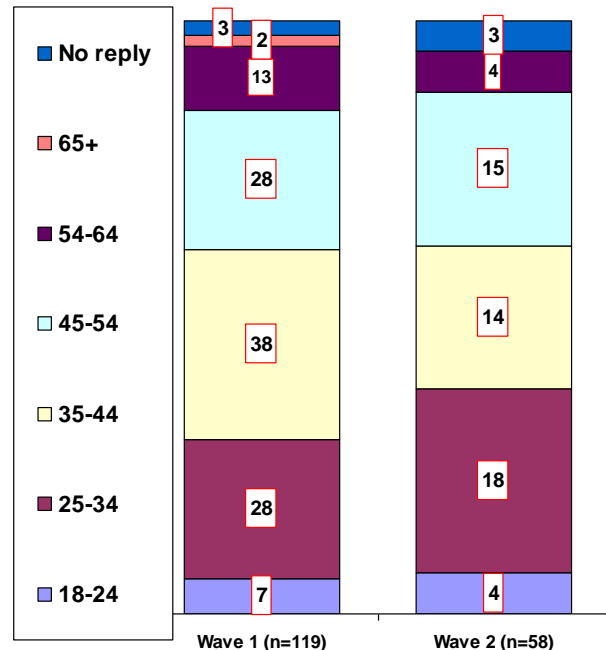


Figure 4: What is your religion?

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

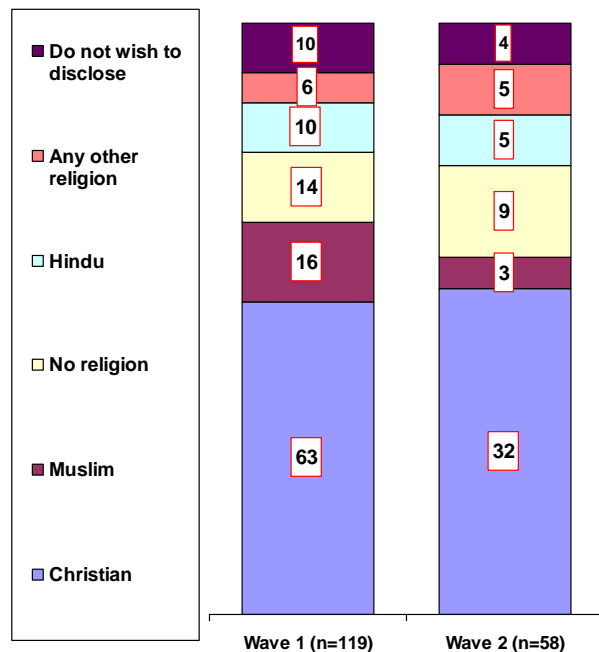
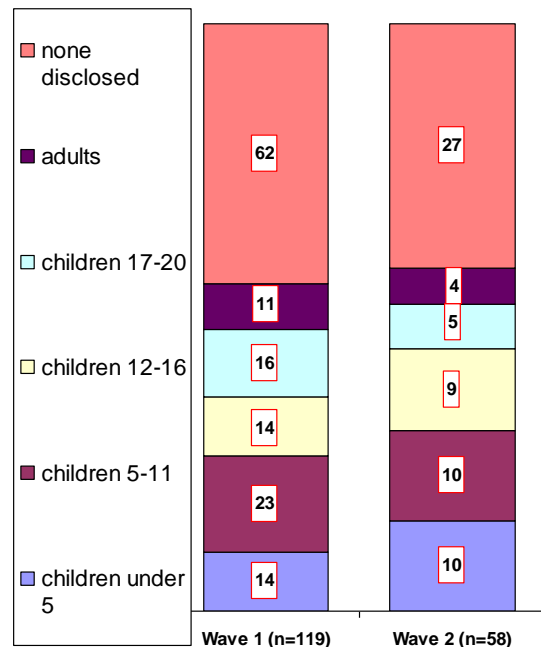


Figure 5: Do you have any dependents?

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer



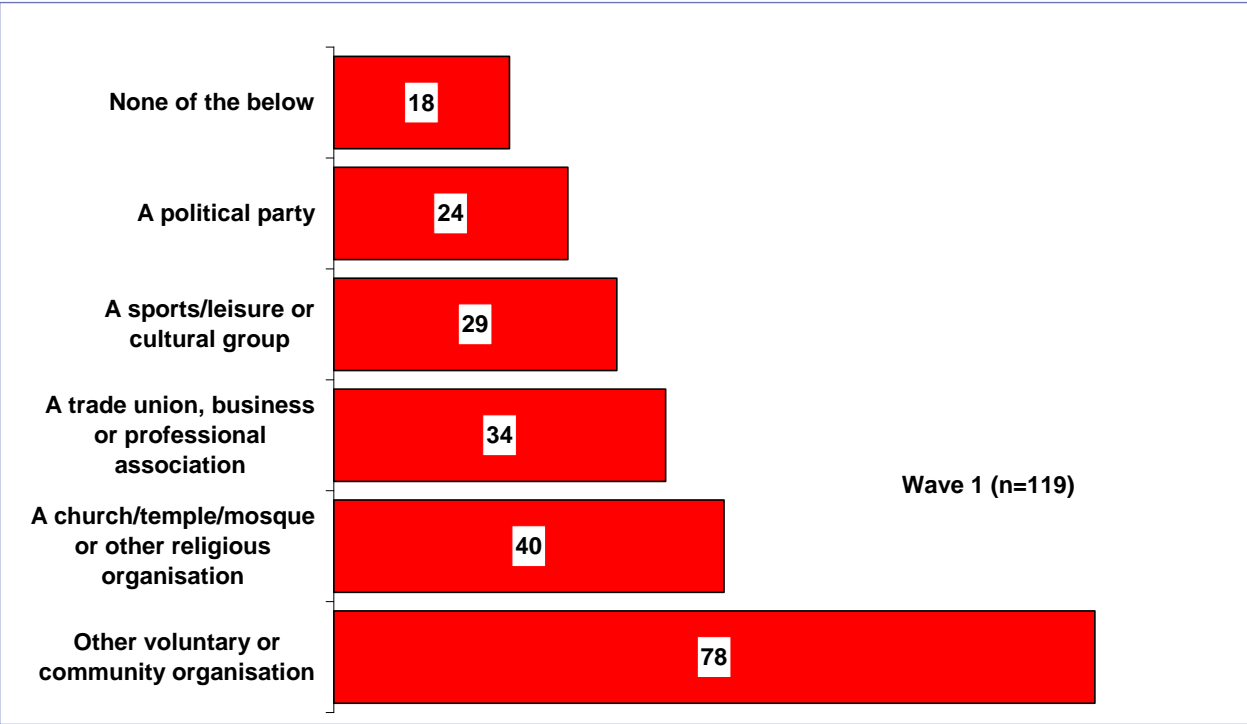
A.2.2 Involvement in public life

As part of the Wave 1 survey, we asked respondents about their involvement in public life before they were involved with the work of the BAME Taskforce; that is, before they attended an event and/or before they applied to take part in the OBV or Solace schemes (see Figure 6 which shows the number of women in the sample who were participating in different forms of community involvement).

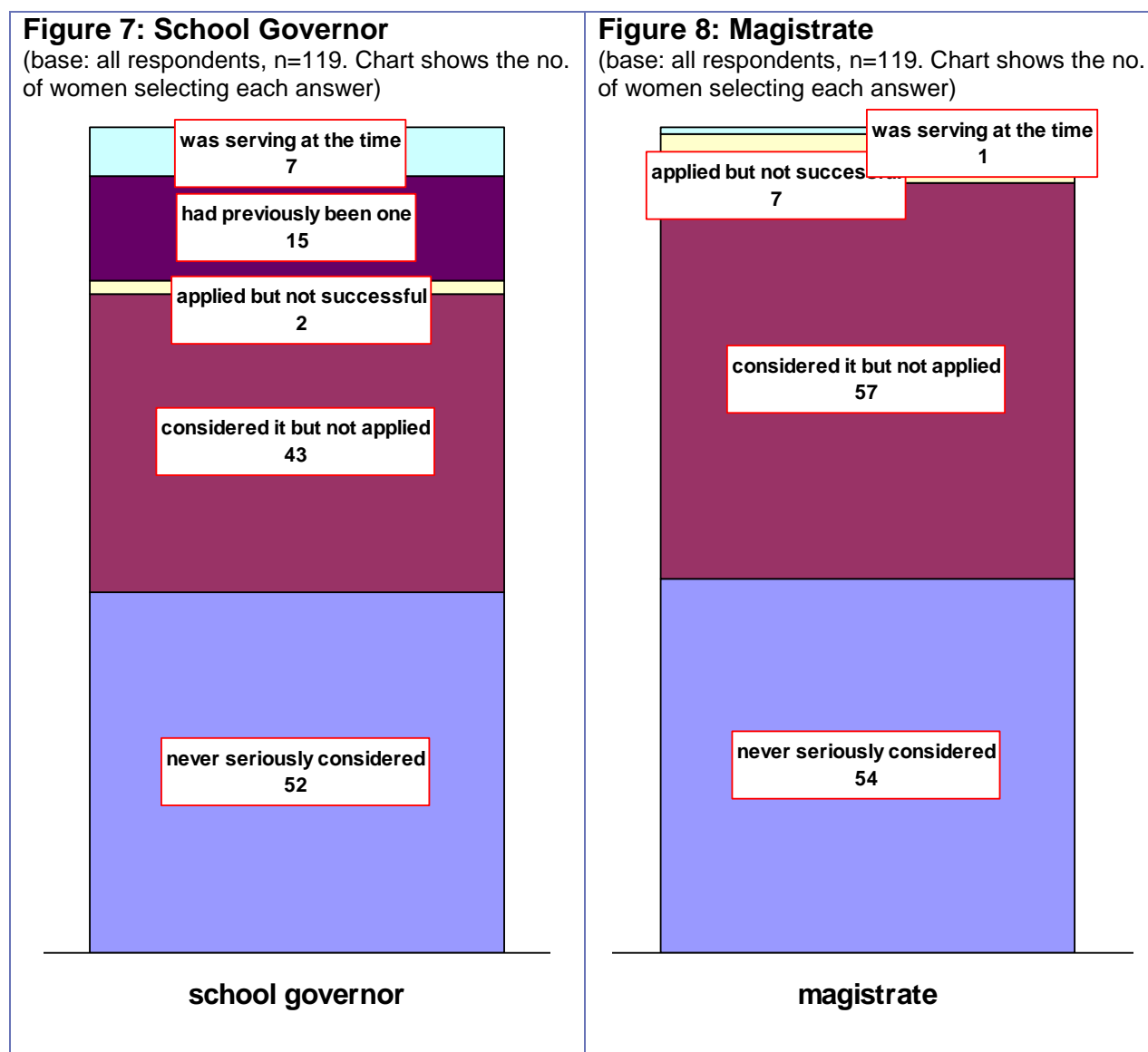
- 85% had had some involvement in their local community
 - two thirds (66%) had been involved with some unspecified voluntary or community organisation
 - one third (34%) were involved with a religious organisation
 - just over a quarter (29%) were involved with a trade union or a business or professional association
 - a similar proportion (24%) were involved with a sports, leisure or cultural group
 - 1 in five (20%) had some involvement with a political party.

Figure 6: Did you actively participate in any of the following?

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer



- Just under one in five (18%) were either serving as a school governor or had done so in the past (see Figure 7)
- One women was serving as a magistrate; seven others had applied but not been successful (see Figure 8)



- One in ten (11%) were either serving on the board of a public body or had previously done so (see Figure 9)
- 14 had made previous attempts to become a councillor: 2 had put themselves forward but not been selected, 11 reported that they had been selected as a prospective candidate but presumably had not been elected while one woman was serving as a councillor at the time (see Figure 10).

Figure 9: Public Body

(base: all respondents, n=119. Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer)

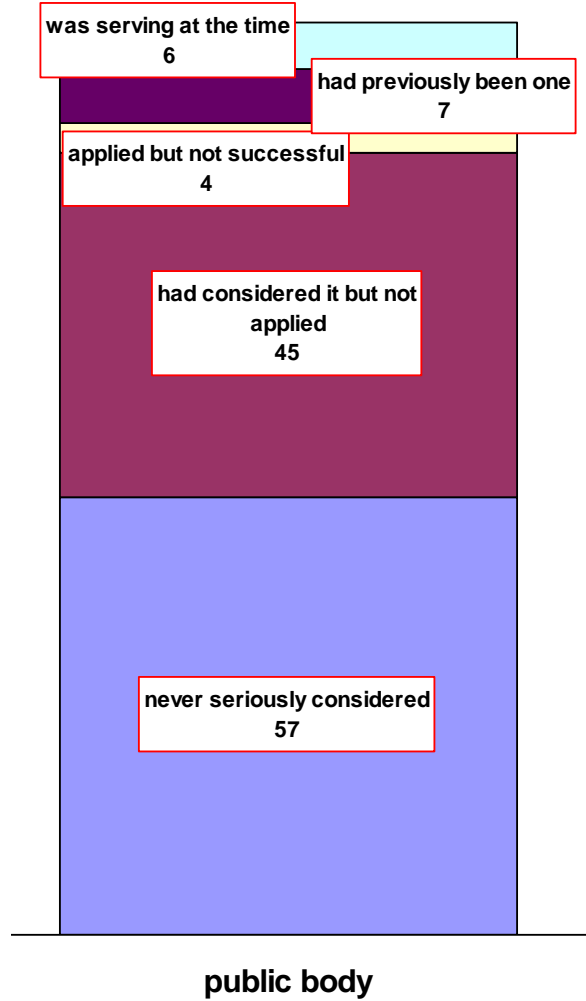
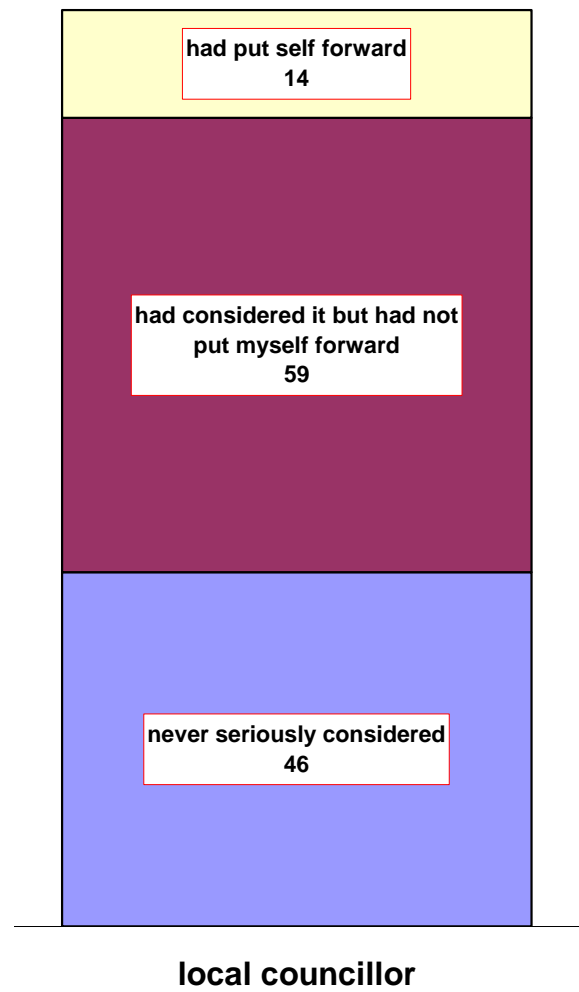


Figure 10: Local Councillor

(base: all respondents, n=119. Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer)



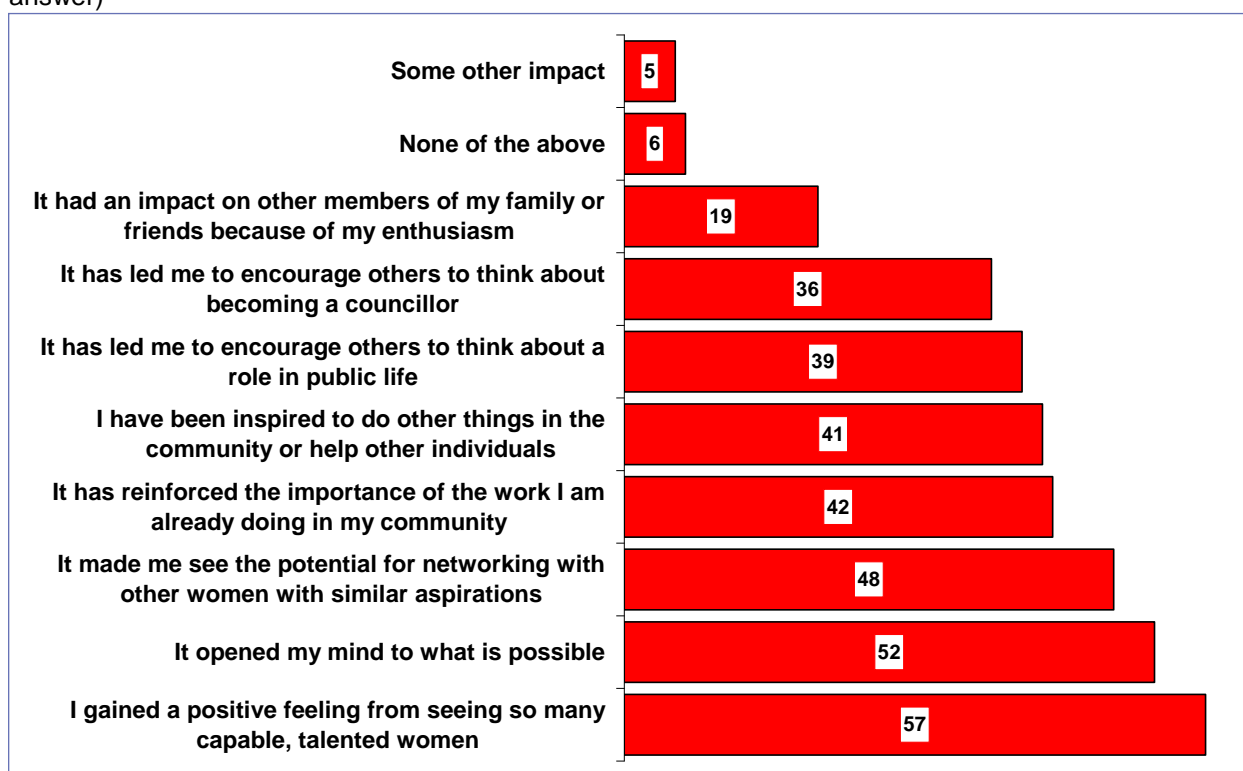
A.2.3 Attendance at taskforce events

- Two thirds of women (n=81) had attended an event:
 - the sample included women from all except three of the events; the Gloucester, Swansea and TUC events were not represented in the sample
 - nearly two thirds of the women on the shadowing and mentoring and half of those on the community leadership course had not attended an event
- Of those who attended an event, two thirds rated it as either 'good' (22%) or 'very good' (43%)
- The impact of the events in terms of having greater involvement in public life was largely positive:

- 64% felt the event made them more interested in becoming a councillor and just 9% felt it made them less interested
- 42% felt the event made them more interested in becoming a member of a public body (2% were less interested after the event)
- 30% were more interested in becoming a magistrate (5% were less interested)
- 25% were more interested in becoming a school governor (6% less interested)
- The events also had a number of other positive impacts; these are summarised in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Other impacts of the outreach events

(base: Wave 1 respondents attending an event; n= 81. Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer)



A.2.4 Knowledge and understanding

Eight statements were used to establish the level of understanding respondents had about being a councillor. The statements were derived from the event feedback evaluation and the focus groups. Respondents rated their level of understanding about each statement using a four point scale:

- very good understanding
- fairly good understanding
- fairly poor understanding
- very poor understanding

The skills and qualities needed to become a councillor

Levels of understanding of the skills and qualities required to become a councillor increased among the women on both programmes (see Figure 12 and Table 6).

Figure 12: Understanding of the skills and qualities needed to become a councillor

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

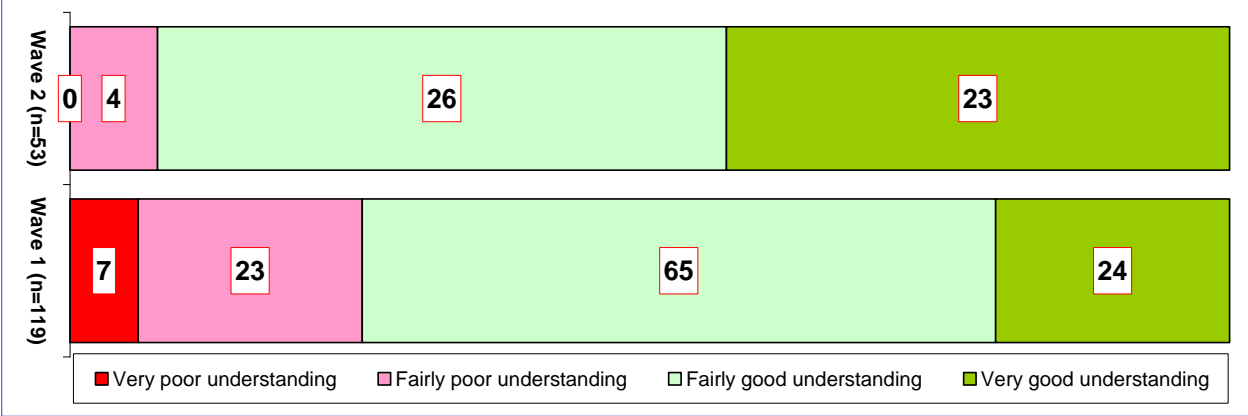


Table 6: Proportion of women who feel they have a very good understanding of the skills and qualities needed to become a councillor

	Proportion with a very good understanding			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(119/53)	(37/20)	(28/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	20%	14%	14%	24%
Wave 2	40%	57%	31%	27%
Change	+20%	+43%	+17%	+3%

At the start of the programmes, 14% of the women on both programmes felt they had a ‘very good’ understanding. Among those on the community leadership course, this increased to 31% by the end of the course, although this is not statistically significant. In contrast, among the women undertaking the shadowing and mentoring, 57% reported that they had a ‘very good’ level of understanding and this was statistically significant (proportion with a very good understanding vs. all others; $X^2 = 9.85$; $df=1$; $p<0.01$).

What a councillor does

The women taking part in both programmes demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in their level of understanding of what a councillor does (see Figure 13 and Table 7). In the case of the shadowing and mentoring scheme, the proportion who felt they had a very good level of understanding increased from 8 to 52% (proportion with a very good understanding vs. all others; $X^2 = 15.42$; $df=1$; $p<0.001$) while for those on the community leadership course the increase was from 14 to 35% (proportion with a very good understanding vs. all others; $X^2 = 4.54$; $df=1$; $p<0.05$).

Figure 13: Understanding of what a councillor does

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

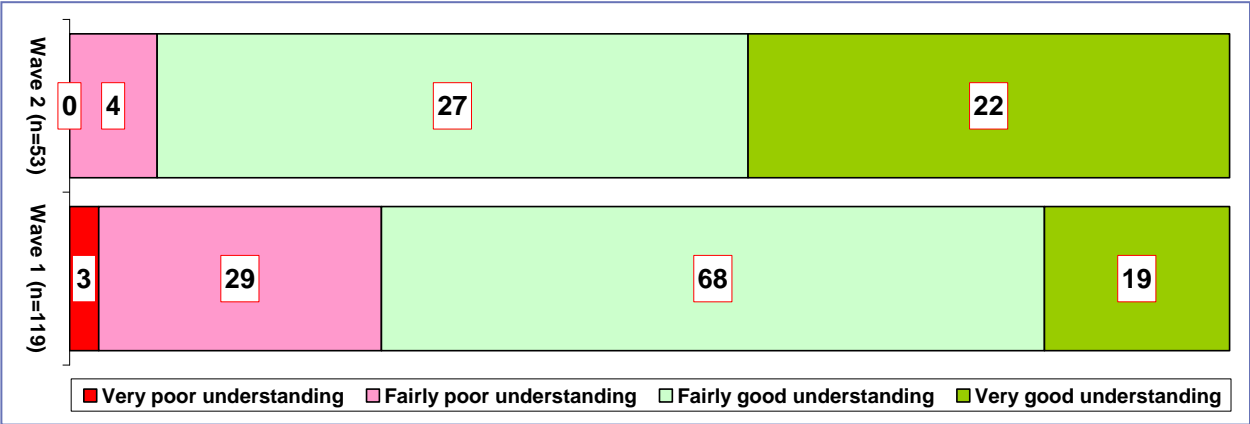


Table 7: Proportion of women who feel they have a very good understanding of what a councillor does

	Proportion with a very good understanding			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(119/53)	(37/20)	(28/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	16%	8%	14%	22%
Wave 2	38%	52%	35%	18%
Change	+22%	+44%	+21%	-4%

What the different parties stand for

Although there were small increases in levels of understanding of this issue, these were not statistically significant (see Figure 14 and Table 8).

Figure 14: Understanding of what the different parties stand for

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

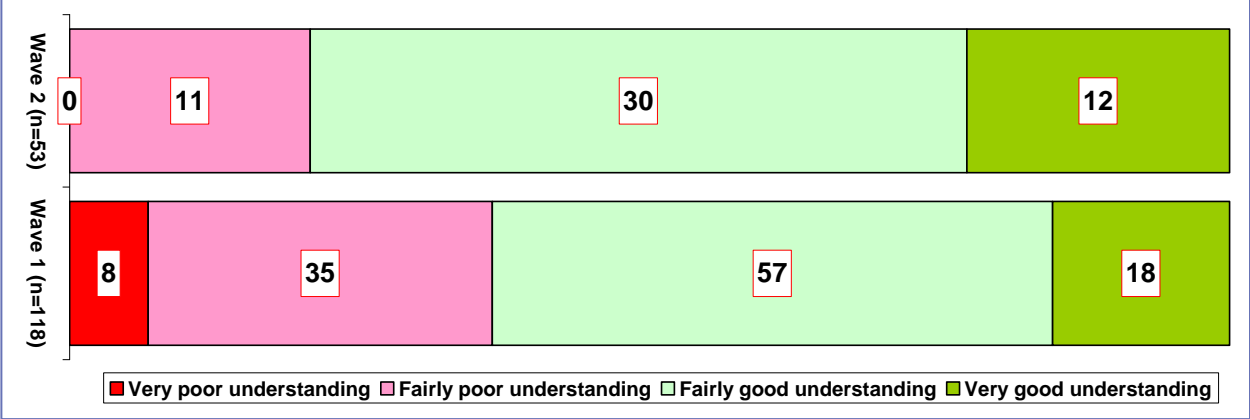


Table 8: Proportion of women who feel they have a very good understanding of what the different parties stand for

	Proportion with a very good understanding			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(118/53)	(37/20)	(27/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	15%	14%	14%	17%
Wave 2	21%	24%	27%	0%
Change	+6%	+10%	+13%	-17%

How decisions are made by councils

Although the women undertaking the shadowing and mentoring showed a small improvement in their level of understanding, this was not statistically significant. In contrast, those on the community leadership course demonstrated a significant improvement from 4 to 27 percent rating themselves as having a ‘very good’ level of understanding (proportion with a very good understanding vs. all others; $X^2 = 7.31$; $df=1$; $p < 0.01$). (See Figure 15 and Table 9).

Figure 15: Understanding of how decisions are made by councils

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

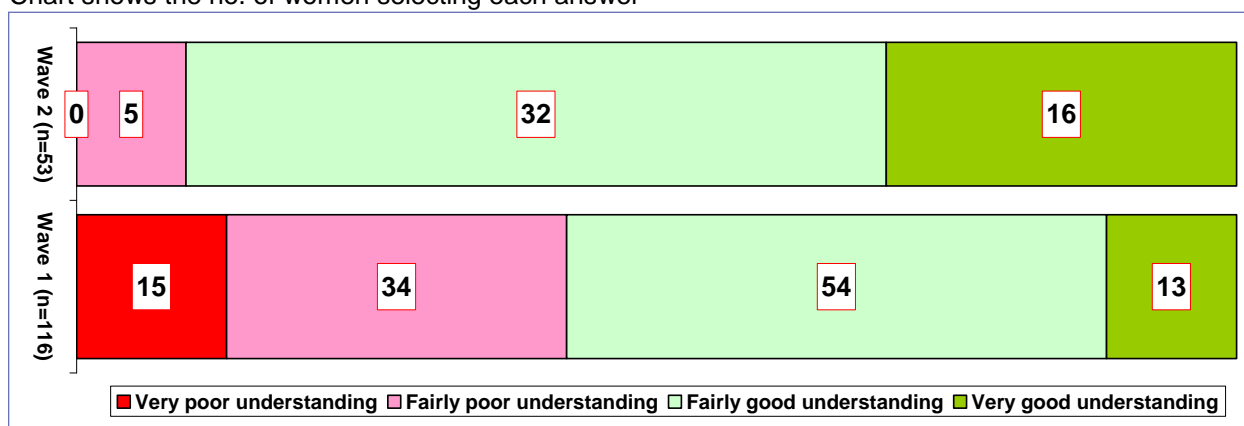


Table 9: Proportion of women who feel they have a very good understanding of how decisions are made by councils

	Proportion with a very good understanding			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(116/53)	(36/20)	(28/22)	(52/11)
Wave 1	11%	11%	4%	15%
Wave 2	28%	24%	27%	36%
Change	+17%	+13%	+23%	+21%

The steps I need to go through to become a councillor

There was a significant increase in the proportion of women on the shadowing and mentoring scheme rating themselves as having a ‘very good’ understanding of the steps involved in becoming a councillor (proportion with a very good understanding vs. all others; $X^2 = 13.38$; $df=1$; $p<0.001$). The women on the community leadership course demonstrated a small, but not significant, increase (see Figure 16 and Table 10).

Figure 16: Understanding of the steps I need to go through to become a councillor

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

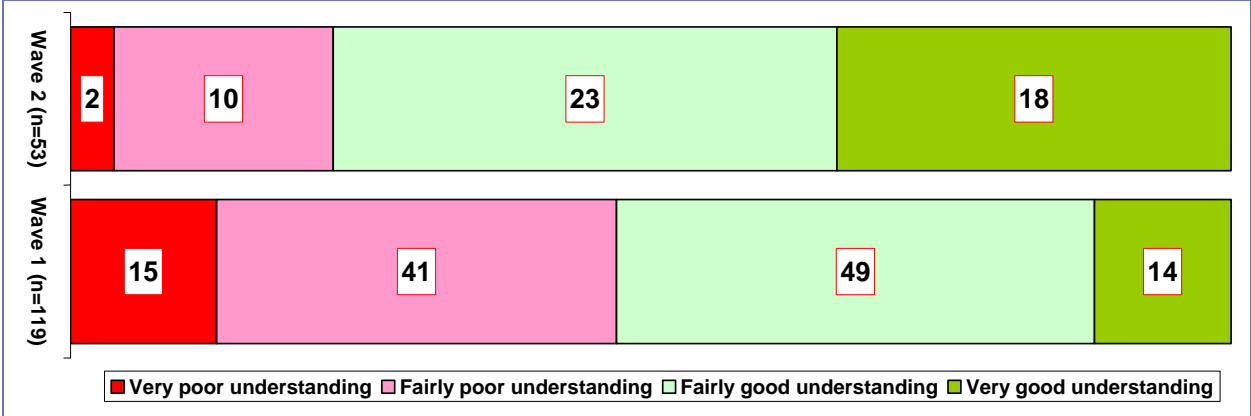


Table 10: Proportion of women who feel they have a very good understanding of the steps they need to go through to become a councillor

	Proportion with a very good understanding			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(119/53)	(37/20)	(28/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	12%	14%	7%	13%
Wave 2	31%	57%	19%	9%
Change	+19%	+43%	+12%	-4%

How to approach a political party

Although the proportion of women taking part in both programmes demonstrated an increased level of understanding, this was only statistically significant for those undertaking the shadowing and mentoring (proportion with a very good understanding vs. all others; $X^2 = 13.38$; $df=1$; $p<0.001$). (See Figure 17 and Table 11).

Figure 17: Understanding of how to approach a political party

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

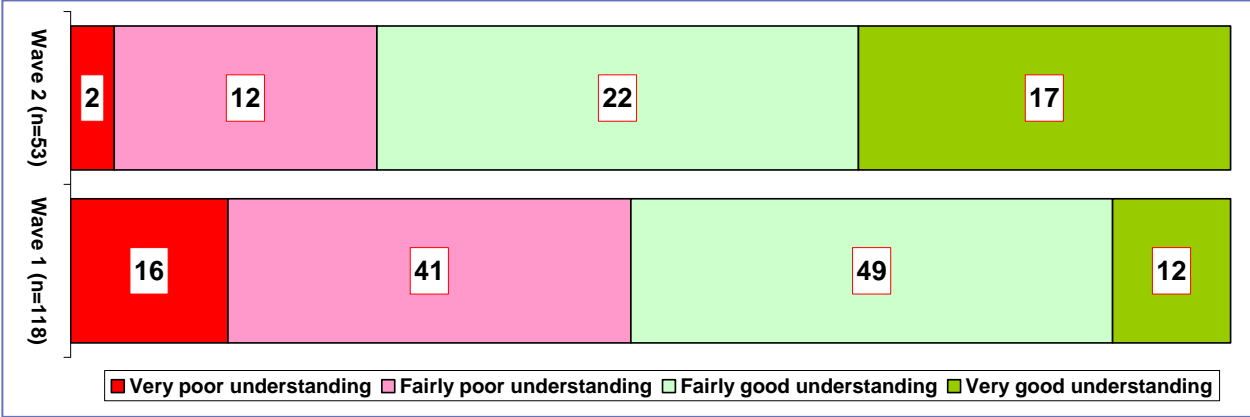


Table 11: Proportion of women who feel they have a very good understanding of how to approach a political party

	Proportion with a very good understanding			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(118/53)	(37/20)	(27/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	10%	14%	7%	9%
Wave 2	29%	38%	27%	18%
Change	+19%	+24%	+20%	+9%

What it means to stand as an independent candidate

The changes in levels of understanding of this issue were not statistically significant (see Figure 18 and Table 12).

Figure 18: Understanding of what it means to stand as an independent candidate
 Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

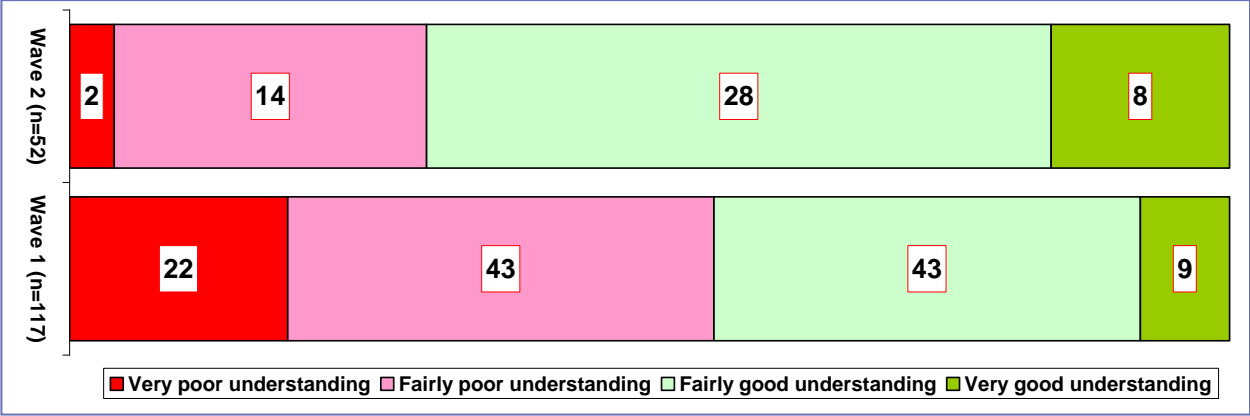


Table 12: Proportion of women who feel they have a very good understanding of what it means to stand as an independent candidate

	Proportion with a very good understanding			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(117/52)	(36/20)	(27/21)	(54/11)
Wave 1	8%	14%	0%	7%
Wave 2	15%	20%	19%	0%
Change	+7%	+6%	+19%	-7%

How appointments are made to the executive and to council committees

While across the total sample there was a small but nevertheless statistically significant increase in understanding (proportion with a very good understanding vs. all others; $\chi^2 = 8.49$; $df=1$; $p < 0.01$), the improvements within each sub-group were not significant (see Figure 19 and Table 13).

Figure 19: Understanding of how appointments are made to the executive and to council committees

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

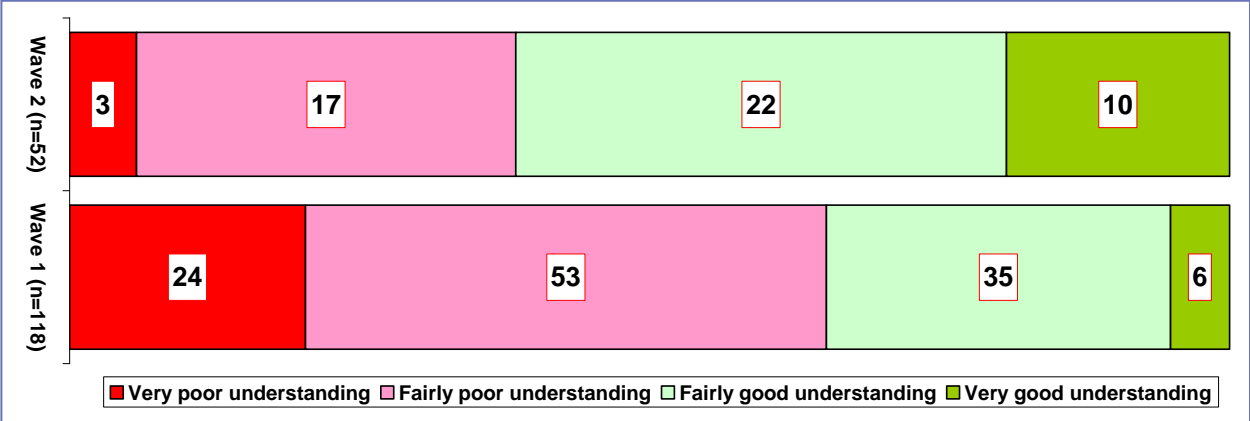


Table 13: Proportion of women who feel they have a very good understanding of how appointments are made to the executive and to council committees

	Proportion with a very good understanding			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(118/52)	(37/19)	(27/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	5%	0%	4%	9%
Wave 2	17%	14%	23%	9%
Change	+12%	+14%	+19%	+0%

As well as looking at how levels of understanding changed for each individual statement, we computed for each woman a single 'knowledge score'. We did this by assigning numerical values to the ratings as follows:

very good understanding =3 fairly good understanding =2 fairly poor understanding =1 very poor understanding =0

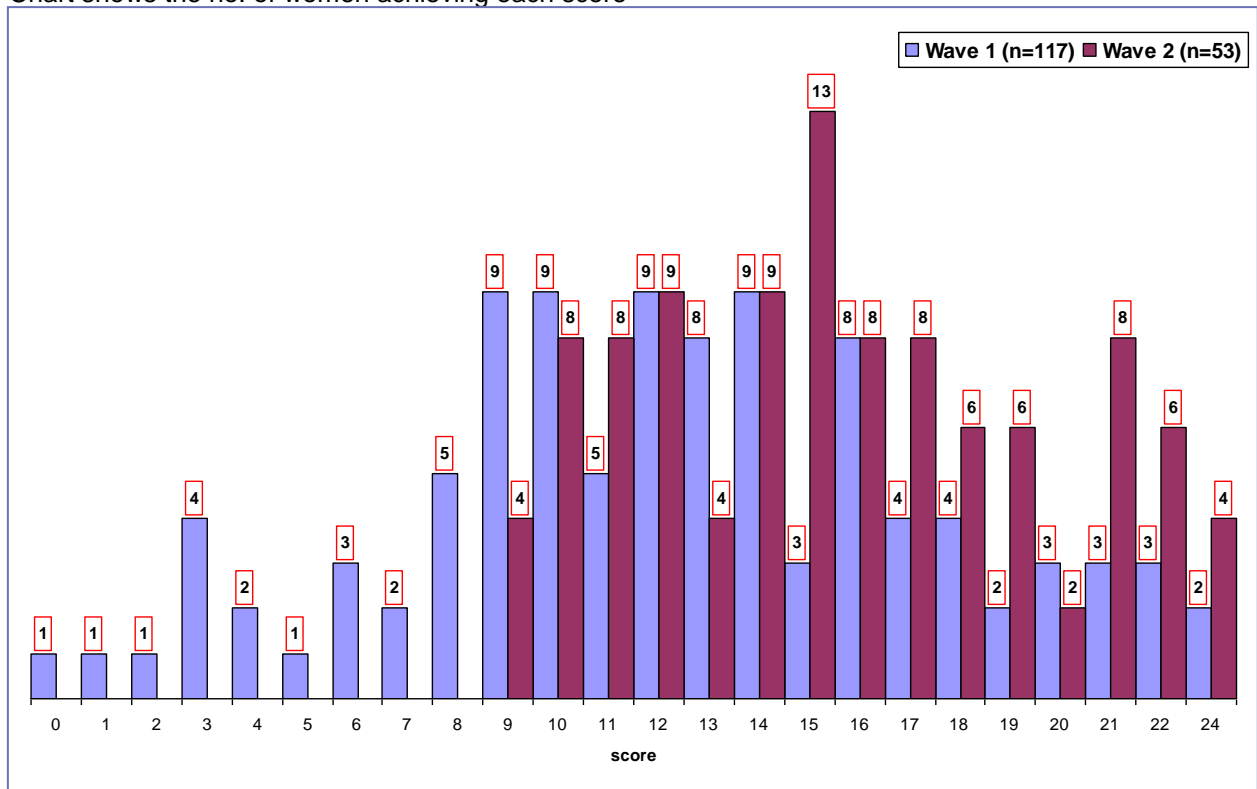
We then added together each woman's scores from the eight statements to give a single 'knowledge score' which could range from

0: very poor understanding of everything to 24: very good understanding of everything

The distribution of 'knowledge scores' is illustrated in figure 20.

Figure 20: Distribution of knowledge scores

Chart shows the no. of women achieving each score



There was an overall improvement in the mean scores between the two waves:

Wave 1 Mean score: 12.3

Wave 2 Mean score: 16.5

The women on both schemes demonstrated significantly higher knowledge scores at Wave 2 with 90% of those on the shadowing and mentoring scheme (proportion with a score above 12 vs. all others; $X^2 = 9.00$; $df=1$; $p<0.01$) and 86% of those on the

community leadership scheme (proportion with a score above 12 vs. all others; $\chi^2 = 9.43$; $df=1$; $p < 0.01$) having scores above the mid point of the range (i.e. above 12 out of 24). See Table 14.

Table 14: Proportion of women with a knowledge score greater than 12/24

	Proportion with a Score >12			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(117/53)	(35/20)	(28/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	57%	57%	29%	52%
Wave 2	81%	90%	86%	55%
Change	+24%	+33%	+57%	+3%

A.2.5 Attitudes towards becoming a councillor

In a similar way, we assessed the women’s attitudes towards becoming a councillor by finding out the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements derived from the qualitative feedback from the events. Respondents were asked to respond to each statement by selecting one of the following:

- strongly agree
- agree
- neither agree nor disagree/ don’t know
- disagree
- strongly disagree.

Attitudes remained largely unchanged from Wave 1 to Wave 2. Of the 12 statements used, there were significant changes on just three.

As a woman I am concerned that I may not get the support of my local community

There was a significant increase in the number of women on the shadowing and mentoring scheme disagreeing with this statement i.e. exhibiting a positive attitude (proportion that disagree/strongly disagreed vs. all others; $X^2 = 7.30$; $df=1$; $p<0.01$).

There was no change in the views of the women on the community leadership course (see Figure 21 and Table 15).

Figure 21: Levels of agreement with ‘As a woman I am concerned that I may not get the support of my local community’

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

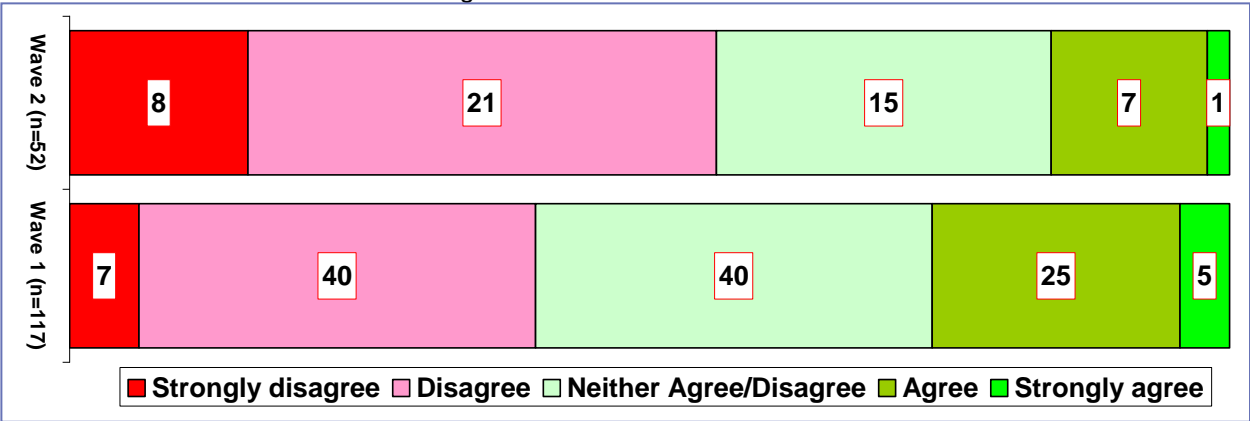


Table 15: Proportion of women who disagree/strongly disagree with ‘As a woman I am concerned that I may not get the support of my local community’

	Proportion that disagree/strongly disagree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(117/52)	(35/20)	(29/21)	(53/11)
Wave 1	40%	43%	45%	36%
Wave 2	56%	70%	48%	45%
Change	+16%	+27%	+3%	+9%

I am concerned that other councillors may not be welcoming

In much the same way, the women who undertook the shadowing and mentoring were significantly more likely to disagree with this statement (proportion that disagree/strongly disagreed vs. all others; $X^2 = 4.35$; $df=1$; $p<0.05$) whereas the opinions of those on the community leadership course did not change significantly (see Figure 22 and Table 16).

Figure 22: Levels of agreement with ‘I am concerned that other councillors may not be welcoming’

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

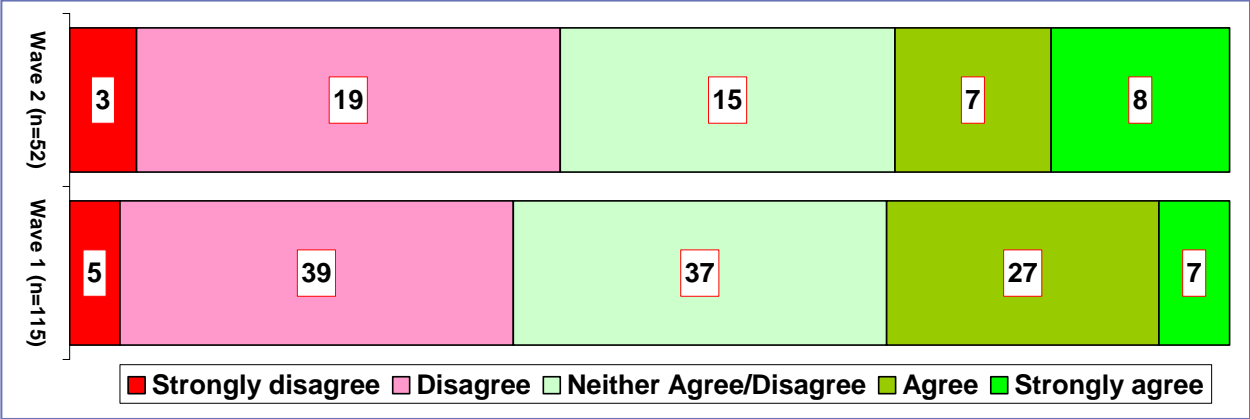


Table 16: Proportion of women who disagree/strongly disagree with ‘I am concerned that other councillors may not be welcoming’

	Proportion that disagree/strongly disagree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(115/52)	(34/20)	(29/21)	(52/11)
Wave 1	38%	35%	48%	35%
Wave 2	42%	60%	33%	27%
Change	+4%	+25%	-15%	-8%

I am put off by having to be a member of a political party

The women who had attended an event but were not taking part in either scheme showed a significant improvement on this attitude statement (proportion that disagree/strongly disagreed vs. all others; $X^2 = 8.50$; $df=1$; $p<0.01$ – see Figure 23 and Table 17). There are two points to note about this. This sub-group started off with a majority of the women expressing a more negative attitude compared to the other two sub-groups. Care has to be taken interpreting the finding as the Wave 2 base is tiny; nevertheless, the women in this sub-group who took the time to take part in the second survey may have been those who were more motivated to pursue their goal of becoming a councillor.

Figure 23: Levels of agreement with ‘I am put off by having to be a member of a political party’

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

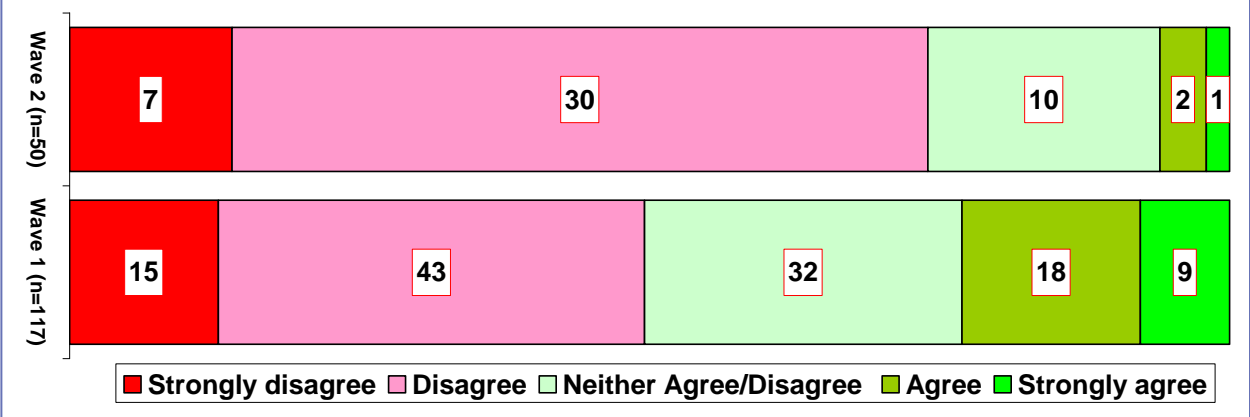


Table 17: Proportion of women who disagree/strongly disagree with ‘I am put off by having to be a member of a political party’

	Proportion that disagree/strongly disagree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(117/50)	(34/20)	(29/21)	(54/9)
Wave 1	50%	65%	72%	28%
Wave 2	74%	70%	76%	78%
Change	+24%	+5%	+4%	+50%

Levels of agreement on the remaining attitude statements did not change significantly (see Figures 24-32 and Tables 18-26).

Participation in politics is important despite the recent negative publicity

Figure 24: Levels of agreement with 'Participation in politics is important despite the recent negative publicity'

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

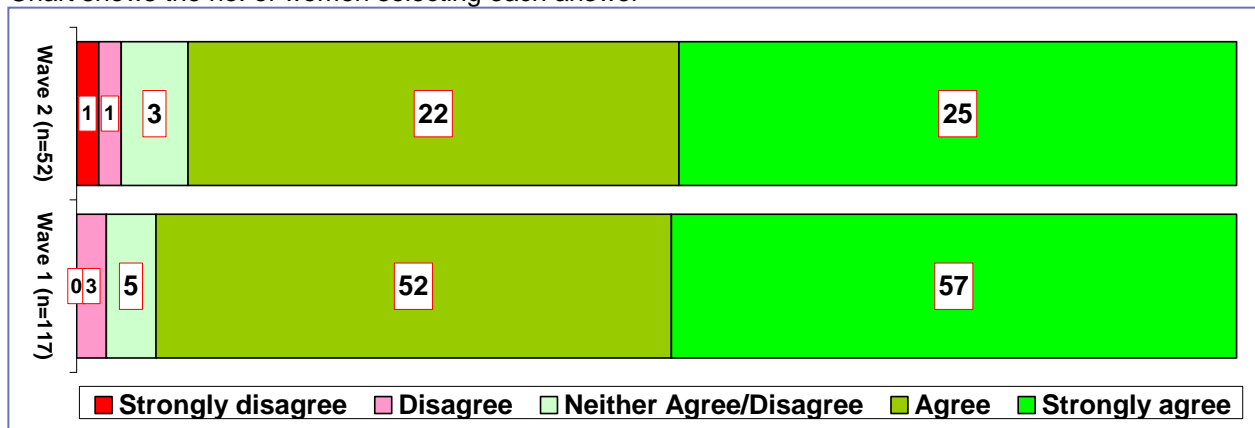


Table 18: Proportion of women who strongly agree with 'Participation in politics is important despite the recent negative publicity'

	Proportion that strongly agree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(118/58)	(35/20)	(29/21)	(53/11)
Wave 1	48%	51%	52%	44%
Wave 2	43%	52%	31%	55%
Change	-5%	+1%	-21%	+11%

I am confident I have many of the skills and qualities needed to become a councillor

Figure 25: Levels of agreement with ‘I am confident I have many of the skills and qualities needed to become a councillor’

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

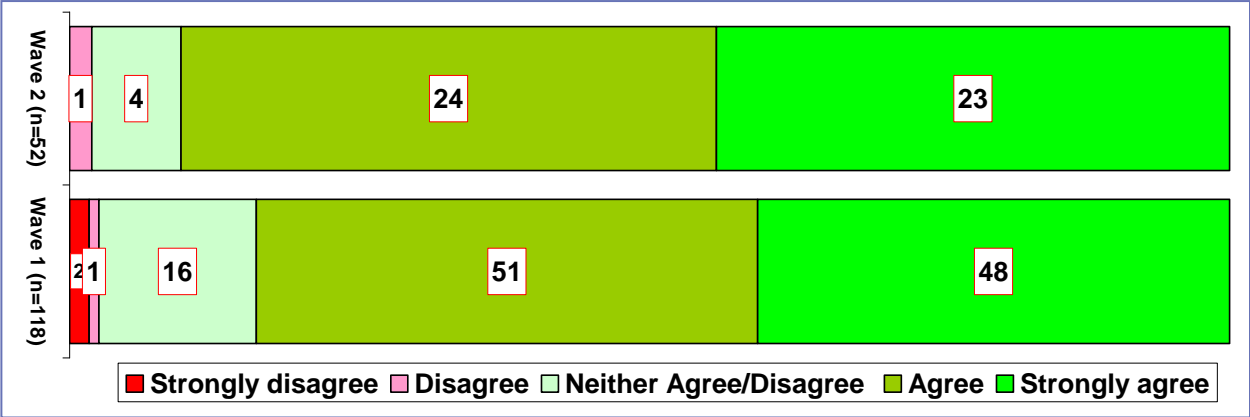


Table 19: Proportion of women who strongly agree with ‘I am confident I have many of the skills and qualities needed to become a councillor’

	Proportion that strongly agree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(118/52)	(35/20)	(29/22)	(54/10)
Wave 1	41%	49%	31%	41%
Wave 2	40%	52%	23%	55%
Change	-1%	+3%	-8%	+14%

My family would support me if I wanted to become a councillor

Figure 26: Levels of Agreement with ‘My family would support me if I wanted to become a councillor’

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

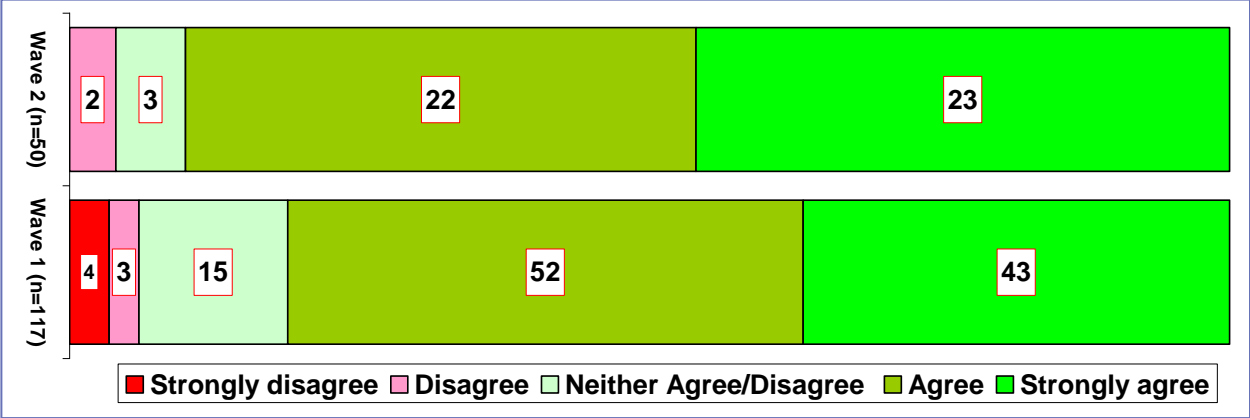


Table 20: Proportion of women who strongly agree with ‘My family would support me if I wanted to become a councillor’

	Proportion that strongly agree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(117/50)	(34/20)	(29/21)	(54/9)
Wave 1	36%	37%	45%	31%
Wave 2	40%	48%	35%	36%
Change	+4%	+11%	-10%	+5%

I am confident that I have the necessary skills to deal with the media

Figure 27: Levels of agreement with ‘I am confident that I have the necessary skills to deal with the media’

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

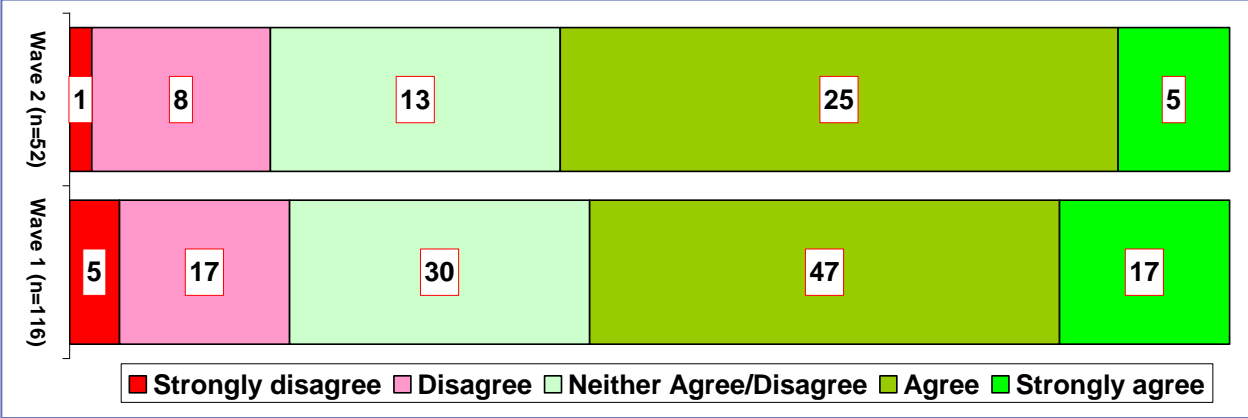


Table 21: Proportion of women who agree/strongly agree with ‘I am confident that I have the necessary skills to deal with the media’

	Proportion that agree/strongly agree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(116/52)	(35/20)	(29/21)	(52/11)
Wave 1	55%	51%	55%	58%
Wave 2	58%	60%	52%	64%
Change	+4%	+9%	-3%	+6%

I am concerned about media intrusion into my personal life

Figure 28: Levels of agreement with 'I am concerned about media intrusion into my personal life'

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

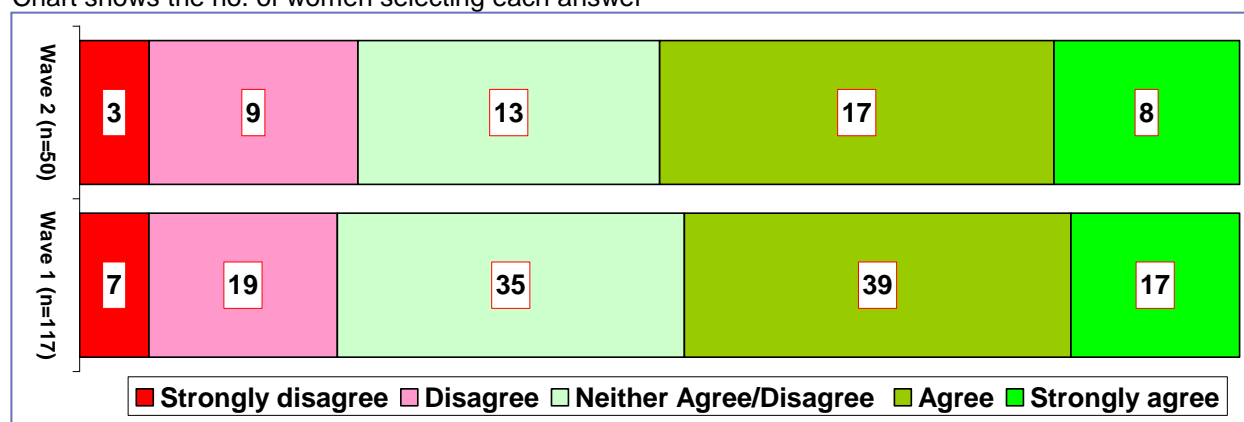


Table 22: Proportion of women who disagree/strongly disagree with 'I am concerned about media intrusion into my personal life'

	Proportion that disagree/strongly disagree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(117/50)	(34/20)	(29/21)	(54/9)
Wave 1	22%	18%	38%	17%
Wave 2	24%	25%	24%	22%
Change	+2%	+7%	-14%	+5%

I'm concerned I might face discrimination in the selection process

Figure 29: Levels of agreement with 'I'm concerned I might face discrimination in the selection process'

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

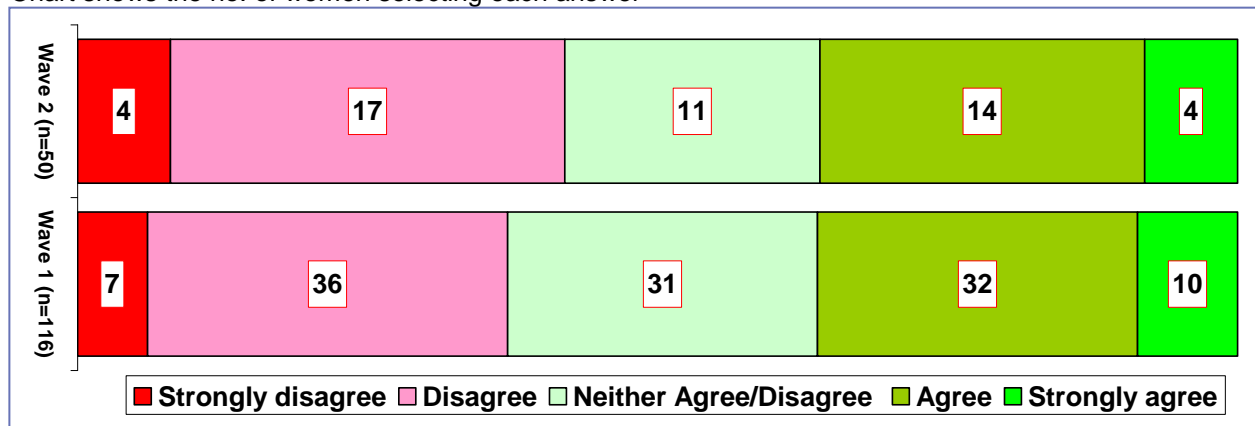


Table 23: Proportion of women who disagree/strongly disagree with 'I'm concerned I might face discrimination in the selection process'

	Proportion that disagree/strongly disagree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(116/50)	(34/20)	(28/21)	(54/9)
Wave 1	37%	38%	32%	39%
Wave 2	42%	55%	29%	44%
Change	+5%	+17%	-3%	+5%

I don't think I can afford to become a councillor

Figure 30: Levels of agreement with 'I don't think I can afford to become a councillor'

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

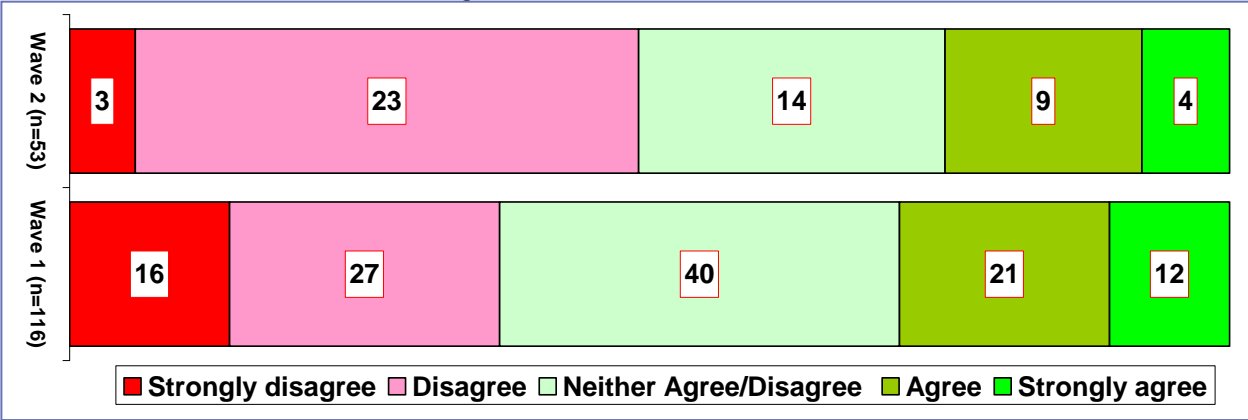


Table 24: Proportion of women who disagree/strongly disagree with 'I don't think I can afford to become a councillor'

	Proportion that disagree/strongly disagree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(116/53)	(35/20)	(29/22)	(52/11)
Wave 1	37%	54%	52%	17%
Wave 2	49%	55%	59%	18%
Change	+12%	+1%	+7%	+1%

I'm concerned that my local party might not be very welcoming

Figure 31: Levels of agreement with 'I'm concerned that my local party might not be very welcoming'

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

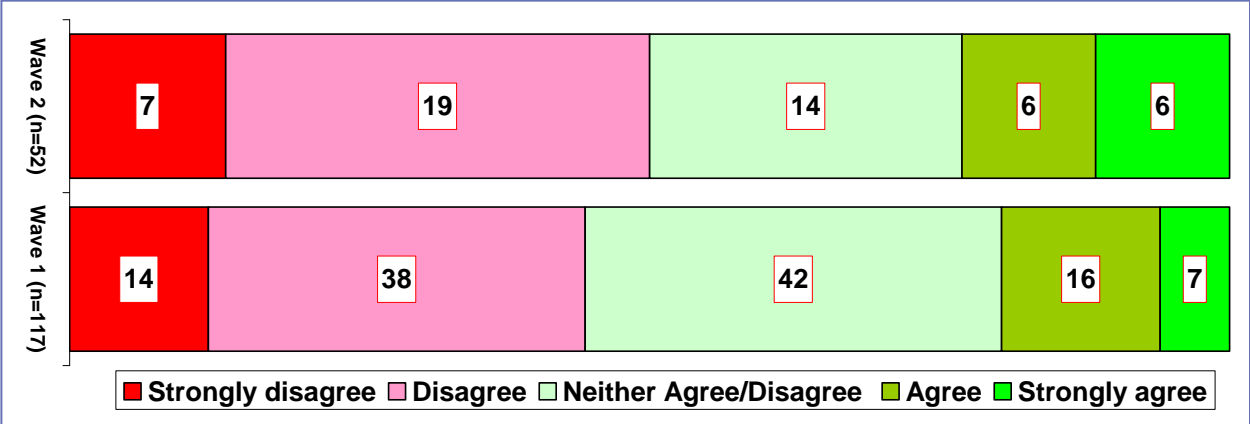


Table 25: Proportion of women who disagree/strongly disagree with 'I'm concerned that my local party might not be very welcoming'

	Proportion that disagree/strongly disagree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(117/52)	(35/20)	(28/22)	(54/10)
Wave 1	44%	49%	46%	41%
Wave 2	50%	55%	55%	30%
Change	+6%	+6%	+9%	-9%

I'm not sure I can commit the time to be an effective councillor

Figure 32: Levels of agreement with 'I'm not sure I can commit the time to be an effective councillor'

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer

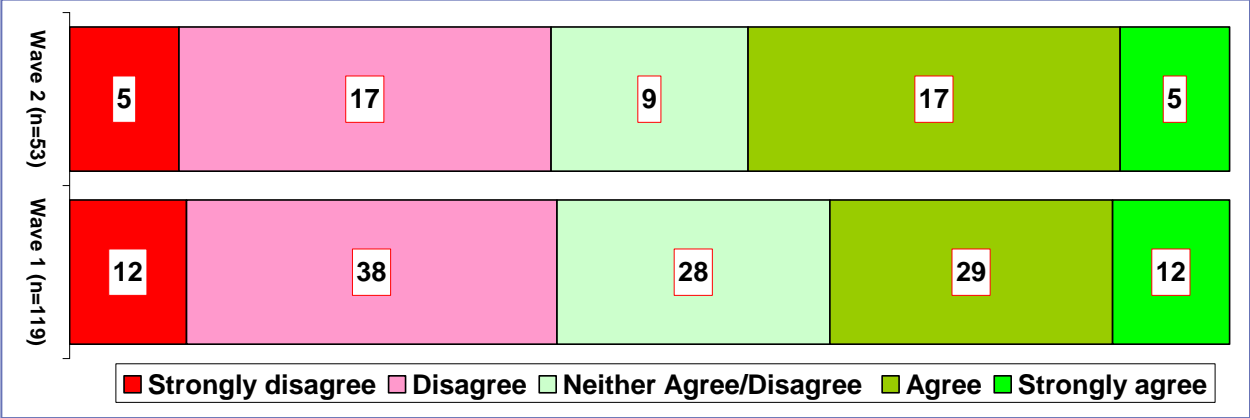


Table 26: Proportion of women who disagree/strongly disagree with 'I'm not sure I can commit the time to be an effective councillor'

	Proportion that Disagree/Strongly Disagree			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(119/53)	(37/20)	(28/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	42%	62%	57%	20%
Wave 2	38%	50%	45%	18%
Change	-4%	-12%	-12%	-2%

For each woman, we calculated a single overall attitude score such that:

- a positive score represents a favourable attitude and a negative score represents an unfavourable attitude
- the higher the score, the more positive or negative the overall attitude whereas scores close to 0 represent a neutral attitude.

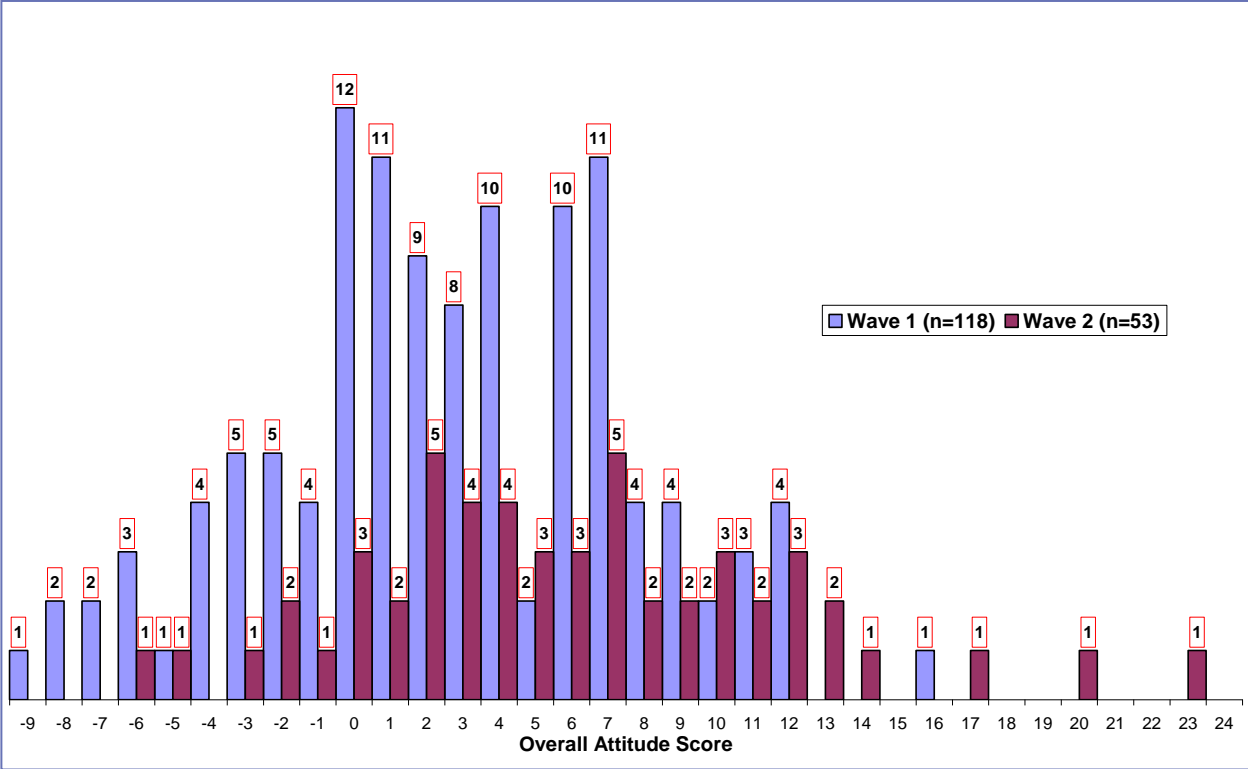
The scores were calculated by assigning the following numerical values to the different responses:

- strongly agree +2
 - agree +1
 - neither agree nor disagree/don't know 0
 - disagree -1
 - strongly disagree -2
- Where agreeing with a statement that reflects a negative attitude, such as, 'I'm concerned my local party may not be welcoming', the scoring was reversed. Likewise, where a woman disagreed with a statement reflecting a negative attitude, the scoring was reversed

Given that there were 12 statements, overall attitude scores could range from -24 through 0 to +24. The distribution of the scores is illustrated in figure 33.

Figure 33: Distribution of overall attitude scores

Chart shows the no. of women achieving each score



There was a small but not statistically significant increase in the overall attitude scores of the women on the community leadership course. In contrast, the women undertaking the shadowing and mentoring demonstrated a significant improvement in their overall attitude scores (proportion with a score above 0 vs. all others; $X^2 = 6.70$; $df=1$; $p<0.01$). (See Table 27).

Table 27: Proportion of women with a positive overall attitude score

	Proportion with a Score >0			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(118/53)	(35/20)	(29/22)	(54/11)
Wave 1	67%	71%	69%	63%
Wave 2	83%	100%	86%	45%
Change	+16%	+29%	+17%	-18%

A.2.6 The process of becoming a councillor

At the time of the first survey, 50% of the women had decided that they definitely wanted to become a councillor or MP and a further 36% were still in the process of making up their minds. Among those on the shadowing and mentoring and community leader schemes, the proportion who had made a definite decision was over 60%.

By the time of the second survey, these proportions had changed slightly as Table 28 shows, although none of the changes were statistically significant.

Table 28: Intention to become a councillor/MP

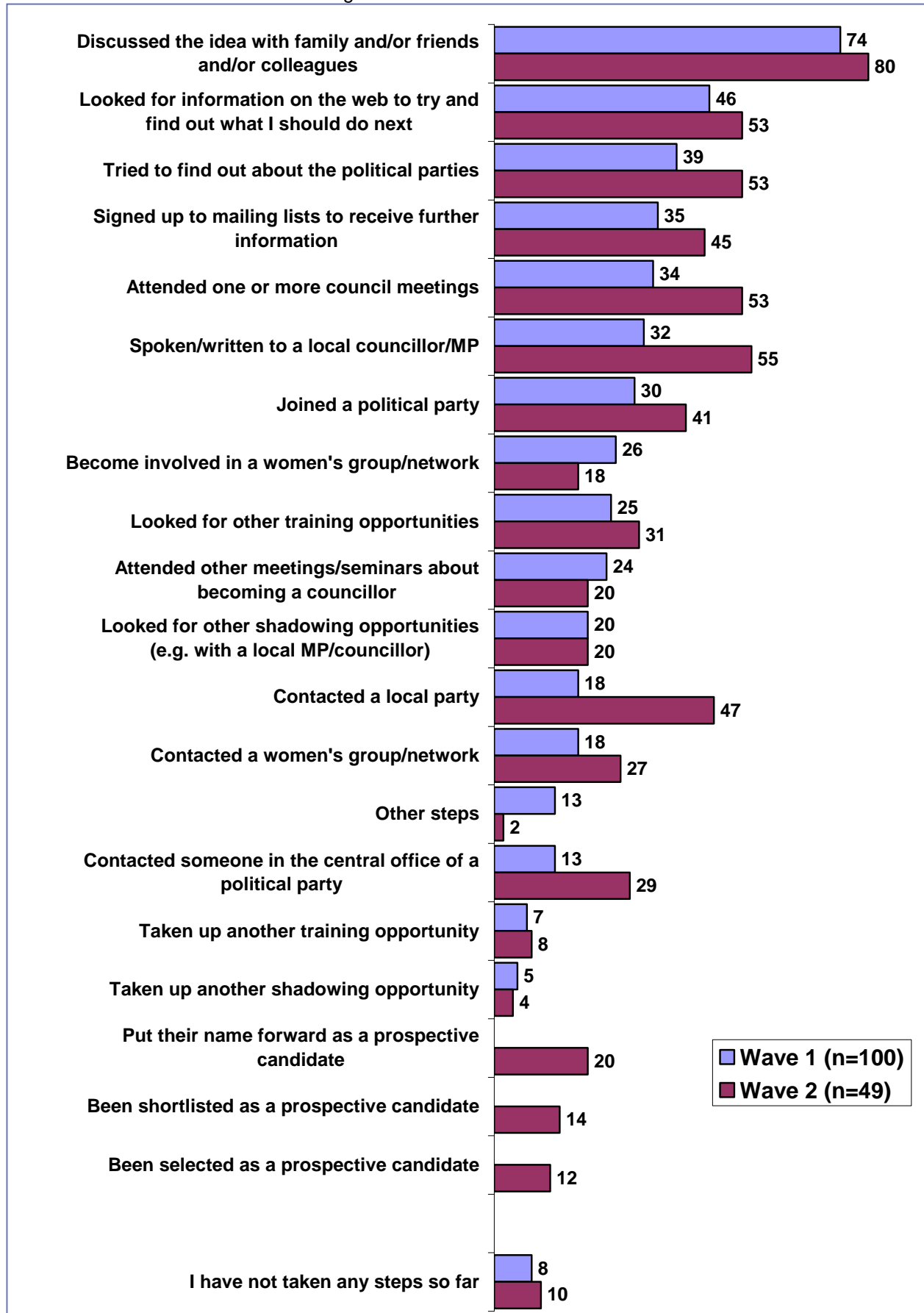
		Intention			
		Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=		(119/55)	(37/20)	(28/24)	(54/11)
Wave 1	to become a councillor/MP	50%	65%	64%	33%
	still making my mind up	36%	31%	32%	39%
	decided it is not for me	13%	-	4%	28%
Wave 2	to become a councillor/MP	60%	75%	54%	45%
	still making my mind up	29%	20%	33%	36%
	decided it is not for me	11%	5%	13%	18%

Those women who, at the time of the wave 1 survey, had not ruled out the idea of becoming a councillor (n=103), were asked to what extent they felt they knew how to progress their intention. All but two answered, of whom only 20 (20%) stated that they knew what they needed to do to progress their intentions, half (50%) had some idea and just under a third (30%) were unsure how to progress the idea.

In both surveys, we asked the women who had not ruled out the idea which steps they had taken to date to progress their intention of becoming a councillor or MP. The proportion of women stating they had taken various steps is illustrated in Figure 34.

Figure 34: Percentage of women who have undertaken various steps

Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer



At the time of the first wave, the average number of steps taken by each woman was 4.4; this had increased to 6.4 by the time of the second wave.

The main changes between the two waves were:

- almost half (47%) had contacted a local party (+29%)
- just over half (55%) had contacted/spoken to a local councillor/MP (+23%)
- a similar proportion (53%) had attended one or more council meetings (+19%)
- just under a third (29%) had contacted someone in central office of a political party (+16%)
- over half (53%) had tried to find out about the political parties (+14%)

There were also a number of major achievements:

- 13 women (just over a quarter of the wave 2 sample) had either put themselves forward as a prospective candidate, been shortlisted or been selected as a candidate
- 7 of these had taken part in the shadowing and mentoring scheme, 3 had participated in the community leadership course and 3 had not been involved in either scheme.

As Table 29 illustrates, women on the shadowing and mentoring scheme demonstrated a significant increase in the number of steps they had taken to pursue their goal by the time of the second survey (proportion taking more than six steps vs. all others; $X^2 = 7.90$; $df=1$; $p<0.01$).

Table 29: Proportion of women taking more than six steps to further their intention of becoming a councillor/MP

	Proportion taking more than six steps			
	Total	Shadowing & Mentoring	Community Leadership	Event only
n=	(98/47)	(34/18)	(27/20)	(37/9)
Wave 1	21%	26%	33%	8%
Wave 2	47%	67%	35%	33%
Change	+26%	+41%	+2%	+25%

Women on the shadowing and mentoring scheme in particular were more likely to have:

- spoken/written to a local councillor/MP (79%; n= 15)
- attended one or more council meetings (79%; n=15)
- contacted or joined a local party (58%; n=11 for both)
- contacted someone in the central office of a political party (47%; n=9)

NB Although the question asked about any steps the women had taken **in addition to** the activities they were doing as part of the two schemes, it is possible that some of the steps that were recorded included things the women were doing as part of the shadowing and mentoring scheme.

Respondents to the first survey who had not ruled out the idea of becoming a councillor/MP were asked what kind of information or support they would find helpful in pursuing their idea. At this stage in the process, only 7 women (7%) indicated that they felt they had all the information and support they needed, a further 4 women (4%) did not answer the question. In other words, 89% of the sample felt they needed some form of help and support and nearly three quarters of the sample were looking for clear guidance on the steps they would need to follow. Figure 35 summarises the different forms of support the women felt they needed.

Figure 35: Percentage of women who would find various forms of information and support helpful in pursuing their intention to become a councillor/MP

(Base: all women taking part in Wave 1 survey who had not ruled out becoming a councillor/MP; n=103. Chart shows the no. of women selecting each answer)

