Speaker's Conference praises the Assembly

Following its visit to the National Assembly in June 2009, the Speaker's Conference on Parliamentary Representation has produced its final report acknowledging the work and staff of the National Assembly in relation to the promotion of equality and diversity.

The Conference had been asked to: "Consider, and make recommendations for rectifying, the disparity between the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the House of Commons and their representation in the UK population at large".

On its visit to the Assembly in June 2009, the Conference took evidence from representatives of voluntary sector organisations, Claire Clancy, Chief Executive and Clerk to the Assembly, Lorraine Barrett AM, Commissioner for the Sustainable Assembly and other Assembly Members. The session focused on the barriers faced by under-represented groups in engaging in the political process.

The Conference's final report made two recommendations specifically applauding the work of the National Assembly:

> **43.** We believe that there is scope for the development of a UK-wide scheme similar to the Step Up Cymru mentoring scheme, but with a strong Westminster element. This could bring together elected members at all levels of government to provide opportunities for people from under-represented groups to find out about their work. The initial aim might be to encourage involvement in community groups, but it should also give encouragement to those who might wish to become candidates for elected office at local and national level or be appointed to a public body.

> **62.** We believe that the House and its Members would benefit from having a small inhouse team on the model of the National Assembly for Wales Equalities Team, responsible for monitoring how the House is doing on all equalities issues and also for planning provision for disabled Members, staff and visitors. The team would have responsibility both for internal and external work to promote greater diversity and equality.

The final report is available here.