1. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is a statutory body established under the Equality Act 2006. It is an independent body responsible for protecting and promoting equality and human rights in Great Britain. It aims to encourage equality and diversity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, and promote and protect human rights.

2. The Commission enforces equality legislation on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It encourages compliance with the Human Rights Act 1998 and is accredited by the UN as an 'A status' National Human Rights Institution.

3. In March 2017 the Equality and Human Rights Commission asked the question “Who runs Wales?” – the fourth time we had asked this question. We found once again in 2017 that progress towards equality in political and public life in Wales was slower than we would have hoped. Therefore we recommend that the expert panel takes steps to ensure that any proposed electoral reform includes considerations for how to secure a more diverse and representative National Assembly in the future.

4. For the first time in 2017 we were able to examine the protected characteristics of race and disability as part of ‘Who runs Wales?’ although only when looking at public appointments. We found that women and disabled people remain under-representations in public appointments. We were unable to perform similar analysis for politicians in Wales due to a lack of data on the protected characteristics of Assembly Members, and those standing in elections.

5. The Wales Act 2017 may provide an opportunity for the National Assembly to take steps to monitor the diversity of Assembly Members and to require political parties to monitor the diversity of candidates. We recommend that the expert panel explores this in greater detail to support a better understanding of the diversity of the National Assembly and how well this represents the diverse population of Wales.

6. In relation to the minimum voting age the UN Committee of the Rights of the Child made the following remarks in its Concluding observations:

“33. The Committee encourages the State party and devolved administrations to conduct consultations with children on the voting age. Should the voting age be lowered, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that it is supported by active citizenship and human rights education in order to ensure early awareness of children that rights are to be exercised as part of citizenship, with autonomy and responsibility, and that the measure does not lend itself to undue influence.”

On this basis we recommend that the expert panel consults young people, and organisations representing the interests of young people in relation to any recommendations to lower the minimum voting age. We further recommend that should this result in such a lowering of the voting age that the necessary changes to the school curriculum are made to ensure young people are able to make informed decisions.