



Government
Equalities Office

Baroness Williams of Trafford
Minister for Equalities

Government Equalities Office
c/o Sanctuary Building
Great Smith Street
London
SW1P 3BT

Caroline Lucas MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Our ref: GEO-00008

Dear Caroline,

Thank you for your emails of 31 July, and 2 May, to the Minister for Women and Equalities about reinstating the Access to Elected Office Fund for disabled people. Your email has been passed to me for a response as Minister for Equalities.

We firmly believe that the primary responsibility for ensuring that disabled candidates have a level playing field in political and public life sits with political parties, which must do more to support their candidates. Your email suggests that you believe that the Government, and not political parties, should meet the additional costs for the adjustments and support incurred by disabled candidates. However, this raises the question of how political parties can expect employers and service providers to make reasonable adjustments for their own disabled employees and customers in line with statutory requirements if we are not prepared to do the same. We expect all political parties to improve the level of support they provide and follow best practice. Together we also need to consider how best to support independent disabled candidates in the long term.

That is why the Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt, Minister for Women and Equalities, has announced a twelve month programme of work with disabled peoples' organisations and political parties to ensure that every disabled person who wishes to stand for office, is able to do so.

In parallel, as you know, we are establishing an interim fund of up to £250,000 to support disabled candidates in local elections, including any Police and Crime Commissioner elections over the coming year. As part of this, we will also consider arrangements for parliamentary by-elections up to May 2019, on a case-by-case basis.

The intention of the interim fund is to help disabled candidates with reasonable adjustments to level the playing field. I am pleased that you welcome this development. At the current time, the details of the delivery of the fund are confidential for commercial reasons.

There is much to do in this area on a cross-party basis, and I welcome your confirmation that the Green Party is happy to participate. My officials are liaising with the Local Government Association and its political groups and party contacts at the local level, and will soon be reaching out to party contacts at the national level via the Cabinet Office.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan', with a large, stylized loop at the beginning.

Baroness Williams of Trafford