Local Government Association

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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Foreword

The opportunity to represent your local community as their elected councillor is a huge privilege and a great responsibility. As their democratically elected local representatives, we make decisions that we believe are in the best interests of everyone in our local communities.

Good democratic decision-making needs local politicians who reflect the range of experiences, insights, connections and networks that exist in their local communities. This includes women, candidates who have parental responsibilities and candidates who have caring responsibilities, such as for children with special needs, family members and friends.

Once councillors are elected, they need to be able to fulfil their duty to their communities, and should be supported to flourish and succeed, regardless of gender or circumstances. Things can also change whilst in office, and for instance, serving councillors can find themselves having to care for an older relative or may want to start a family. This obviously shouldn't mean they can no longer fulfil their role as a councillor, but it may mean they need flexibility, understanding and support. Local government is too important to miss out on skills and talent for no good reason.

What we'd like to see as a result of this toolkit is that more women, parents and carers are empowered and supported to take office and take on leadership roles within their councils. We want to hear that elected councillors are supported so that they fulfil their potential, contribute fully, represent their communities and are still able to lead their lives outside of the council chamber.

It was 100 years last year since the first women in the UK were granted the right to vote for MPs. The LGA worked with the Women's Local Government Society to mark the occasion through campaigns such as from suffrage to citizenship: identifying 100 Suffrage Pioneers. It is important to carry on that good work and create a legacy that looks forwards as well as back. At the moment, around a third of councillors are women and about 1 in 5 leadership roles are occupied by women.

It is disturbing that some women councillors, and councillors' families, are being targeted for intimidation, particularly online, and this has led to many being unwilling to stand for election or re-election. Councils can create a supportive environment for women and parents and carers, and anyone affected by prejudice and abuse, to help them stand and serve with confidence. We want to see more women, parents and carers empowered and supported to take office and take on leadership roles within their councils.

As women councillors, as parents and carers, we hope this piece of work will help future generations of stand, serve, and flourish in local government.

Cllr Marianne Overton (Independent)

LGA Independent Group website and resources for councillors

Cllr Izzi Seccombe (Conservative)

LGA Conservative Group website and resources for councillors

Cllr Farah Hussain (Labour)

LGA Labour Group website and resources for councillors

LGA Labour Group women's taskforce

Cllr Anita Lower (Liberal Democrat)

LGA Liberal Democrat Group website and resources for councillors

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Foreword from Jake Berry MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for the Northern Powerhouse and Local Growth

Representing my local community in Rossendale and Darwen as their Member of Parliament continues to be one of the greatest privileges of my life.

As every MP and councillor across the country knows, our communities put trust in us to make decisions on their behalf and with this comes huge responsibility.

We have recently marked 100 years of women having the vote, yet it is astonishing that there are still so few women councillors and only 1 in 5 council leaders are women. If those who elected us can't relate to us then democracy falls at the first hurdle. We need to be as diverse as those we serve and we need to ensure that when it comes to local politics the right conditions are in place to allow candidates from every walk of life to be empowered and supported to take office.

We want more women, more young people, and those with caring responsibilities, to feel encouraged to step forward knowing that they have the assurance of flexibility to continue in their role if their circumstances change. It should be their right to expect this in a caring modern society.

Some councils have taken steps to address this issue already but to see a step change in the numbers of women, parents and carers standing for elected office there needs to be a much wider sector response. That's why I very much welcome the work the Local Government Association, in partnership with Happen Together CIC and the Fawcett Society have done in producing this toolkit.

Councils have the tools to remove some of the barriers which prevent people from standing and local parties and politicians have an obligation seek out talent and incentivise a broader range of people to stand for local office. I hope councils will use this toolkit to celebrate what is working but also to review their performance to commit to take action where they can see that more can be done.

Councillors in England work hard to support the communities they serve. Why should they not be supported in return?

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Purpose of this toolkit

This toolkit has been developed to help councils create the underlying policies, procedures, ethos and environment that encourages and empowers women, parents and carers to become local councillors and take on leadership positions.

We encourage councils to consider their existing practices, celebrate what is working, share good practice and take action to support councillors who are women, parents and carers.

The equal participation of women and men in local politics, as our elected councillors and as our leaders, is an important condition for effective democracy and good governance. Representative councils are best able to speak to, and for, their communities and to support the effective business of local government. Democracy and decision-making are strengthened when councillors reflect the people they seek to serve and represent.

The focus of this toolkit is women, parents and carers. You will also find it useful to consider other characteristics including disabilities, BME groups and LGBT+ and how these interact with the participation of councillors who are women, parents and carers.

This toolkit is based on the principles of sector-led improvement, that councils:

- are responsible for their own performance
- are accountable locally, not nationally
- have a sense of collective responsibility for the performance of the sector as a whole
- are supported by the LGA through tools and support

Through a coordinated approach to sector-led improvement across local government, the LGA helps councils continue their own improvement journey, take up our support tools and offers and contribute to the improvement of local government as a whole.

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How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is aimed at supporting anyone who wants to review, celebrate, share and take action to ensure their council effectively supports the political participation of women, parents and carers.

The toolkit is aimed at local councillors and local government officers, but is available to any local groups, organisations or residents who want to get involved in this conversation.

The tools presented here are designed to enable you to:

STEP 1 MAKE THE CASE

STEP 2 UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS OF CHANGE

STEP 3 BRING OTHERS ON BOARD AND CREATE SHARED OWNERSHIP

STEP 4 DO THE PREPARATION (MAKE A PLAN, COMMUNICATE AND COLLECT DATA)

STEP 5 UNDERSTAND THE CURRENT PICTURE

STEP 6 CREATE A VISION OF WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT

STEP 7 DEVELOP SOLUTIONS TO GET THERE

STEP 8 UNDERSTAND WHAT RESOURCE IS NEEDED

STEP 9 MONITOR PROGRESS

This is not a prescriptive programme for change. While there are suggested models for how to go about understanding your local picture and the changes you want to make, things will be different in different councils. This toolkit is designed to support all types of council, district, county, unitary, metropolitan/borough, combined, and to work with the level of resources, capacity and expertise you have available to make these improvements.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY COUNCILS

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You may be considering a stand-alone programme on the representation of women, parents and/or carers, be looking to implement greater flexibility for councillors with caring responsibilities, or this may form part of a wider local programme on democracy and governance with local or regional partners.

The toolkit presents questions and tools to support strengths-based conversations that will help you listen to a wide range of perspectives and gather the information you need to take purposeful action in line with your priorities and resources as a council.

Why strengths-based conversations?

Using strengths-based conversations, sometimes called asset-based approaches, enables individuals, groups and communities to focus on the resources, capacity and things that already exist and are working, the things we want to change and what is available to make that change happen. The key features of this conversation are listening, starting from strengths not problems, existing assets not deficits and building relationships to work together.

The self-assessment part of the toolkit is structured around five central themes:

1. understand your local picture
2. leadership and power
3. flexible and family-friendly workplace
4. culture and conduct
5. supporting women, parents and carers

This toolkit seeks to support your council on a journey to understand the local picture, to decide what is working and not working and what steps you want to take. Where possible, examples of existing practice from other councils are shared to support your work. The LGA is keen to support councils, so please share experiences of using this toolkit, exploring strengths and designing new solutions. Please email beacouncillor@local.gov.uk with any feedback, case studies or examples of good practice you have or develop.

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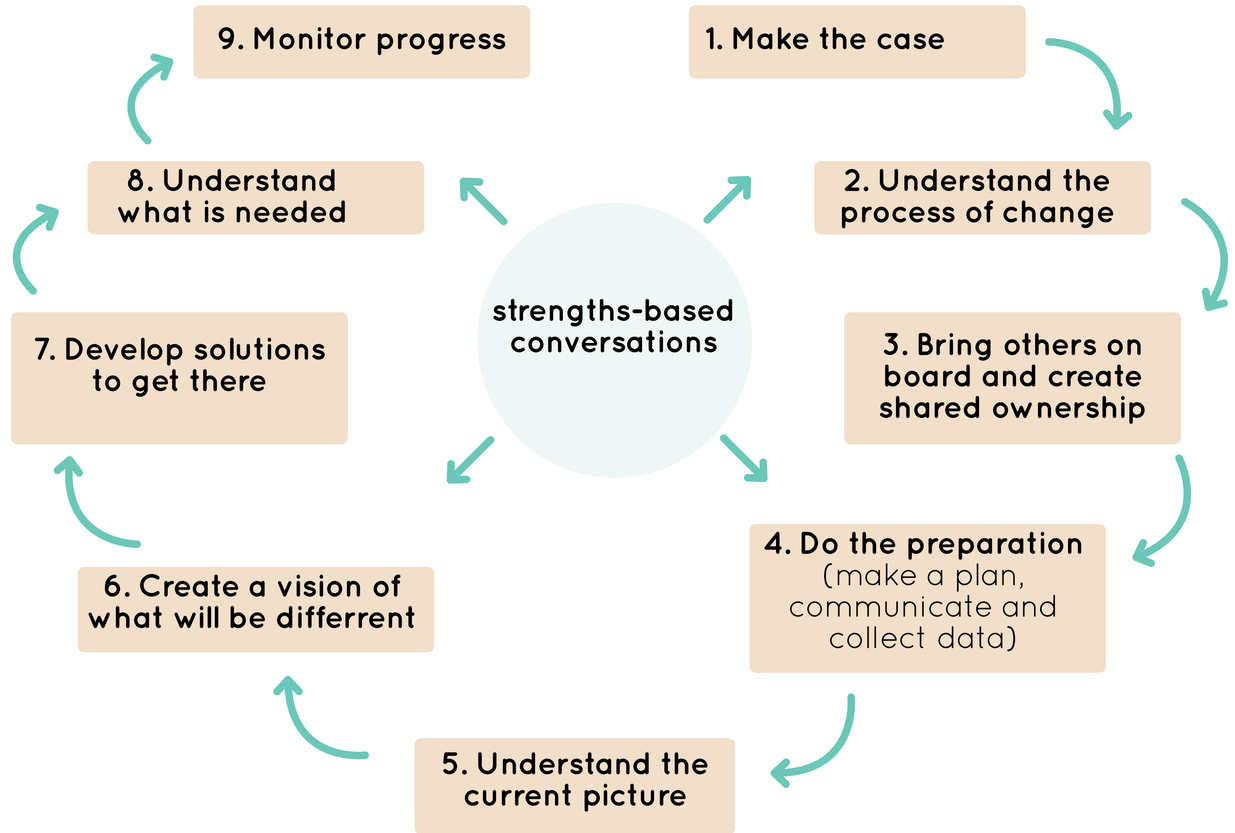
Step-by-step guide

This is an overview of the process for completing the workbook:



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Step 1: Making the case for change

Whatever your role and starting point, you will need to bring others on board to help drive and inform the process of change. This means you need to demonstrate to a range of stakeholders why this warrants their time through a 'case for change'.

The following summary is designed to support this first step. This focuses on basic numbers and the benefits of making a change. You could use this to communicate with an individual councillor who has influence on this agenda, for example the council leader or deputy leader, or an equalities lead. Or it could help support a motion to full council or a presentation to a formal committee or informal group.

The case for change in numbers

This toolkit is designed to help you build and understand the picture in your council and how this compares to the national context. At this point you are using what data and information is easily available to help you to make the case to others. This will be limited; you are unlikely to have all of the local data pointed to below. You may later decide to fill some of your identified data gaps whilst acknowledging that some data may simply not be available to you. For now just focus on what you do have.

1. Understand the pipeline: women, parents and carers ready and willing to participate

Locally:

- How many women over the age of 18 live in the council area?
- What per cent of the local population have caring or parental responsibilities?

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Nationally:

- women are 51 per cent of the population in the UK[1]
- the 2011 census found 10.3 per cent of the UK population are providing unpaid care[2]; Carers UK found 78 per cent of care givers were female[3]
- in 2016 it was estimated that there were over 14 million parents with dependent children in the UK[4]; nearly a quarter of these families are single parent families and 91 per cent of these single parents are women[5]
- women undertake up to 60 per cent more unpaid work than men (cooking, childcare, housework) according to ONS analysis[6]
- IPPR estimate that 85 per cent of women in the UK are registered to vote[7]
- 2017 general election data shows women are as likely to turn out to vote as men[8]; women aged 18-24 saw the largest increase in voting turnout from 44 to 53 per cent[9]
- on average, 34 per cent of political party members are women[10].

2. Women, parents and carers as candidates

Locally:

- How many candidates at the last council election were women? What per cent was this of all candidates?

1 2011 Census https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/british-population/demographics/male-and-female-populations/latest ; broader population estimates up to date from ONS (not include sex) https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates

2 Defined as "unpaid care for family members, friends or neighbours due to long-term physical or mental ill health or disability or due to old age", 'Carers', House of Commons Briefing Paper Number 7756, 22 November 2017,

3 'State of Caring 2018', Carers UK

4 Estimated number of parents in families with dependent children by ethnic group of the parent, UK, 2016, ONS

5 https://www.gingerbread.org.uk/policy-campaigns/publications-index/statistics/

6 ONS analysis of time-use data, 2016

7 'Power to the people? Tackling the gender imbalances in Combined Authorities and Local Government', p6, IPPR, August 2017

8 'Women, men and the 2017 general election', Jane Green and Chris Prosser, British Election Study, January 2018

9 'Power to the people? Tackling the gender imbalances in Combined Authorities and Local Government', p3, IPPR, August 2017

10 'Power to the people? Tackling the gender imbalances in Combined Authorities and Local Government', p6, IPPR, August 2017

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- How many candidates had parental or caring responsibilities? What per cent was this of all candidates?

Nationally:

There is currently no national data available on the numbers of women, parents or carers standing as council candidates in England and Wales.

3. Women, parents and carers serving as councillors

Locally:

- How many women are currently serving as councillors? What per cent is this? Has this number increased, decreased or stayed constant in recent years?
- How many of the current councillors have parental or caring responsibilities? What per cent is this? Has this number increased, decreased or remained constant over recent years?

Nationally:

- women are 33 per cent of councillors in England, this has increased 5 per cent in the last 20 years; women are 26 per cent of councillors in Wales[11]
- women are 76 per cent of employees in the local government workforce[12] and 32 per cent of serving MPs[13]
- in 2013, 28 per cent of serving councillors reported having one or more caring responsibility, 14.5 per cent were caring for children[14].

11 'Women in Parliament and Government', Briefing Paper SN01250, July 2018, House of Commons Library

12 Stats on the LGA Workforce, LGA 2016

13 'Women in Parliament and Government', Briefing Paper SN01250, July 2018, House of Commons Library

14 'Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013', LGA

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4. Women, parents and carers in leadership roles

Locally:

- How many cabinet members are women? Are either the leader or deputy leader(s) women?
- How many cabinet members have parental or caring responsibilities? Do either your leader or deputy leader(s) have parental or caring responsibilities?

Nationally:

- One in 5 council leaders are women; this compares to women as 33 per cent of council chief executives[15]
- women are 30 per cent of cabinet members overall
- none of the 'Metro Mayors' elected in 2017 are women; 12 per cent of combined authority representatives are women[16]
- no national data is available on the per cent of leaders or cabinet members with parental or caring responsibilities

The benefits of change

It has been over 100 years since the first woman served as a local councillor17. Since then many more women have taken up the mantle of holding local government office. With women making up half of the population, it is desirable that they are equally represented. There has been progress, although this has been slow and recent evidence has suggested that it has stalled, and councils in England and Wales are not yet achieving equal participation in political representation.

A growing percentage of the workforce in England and Wales are parents or carers for dependant children or elderly relatives. Local government benefits from drawing on the widest possible pool of capable, vibrant, energetic and engaged citizens, with a commitment to local people and a passion for change.

15 'Does Local Government Work for Women?' Final Report of the Local Government Commission, July 2017, Fawcett and LGiU

16 'Does Local Government Work for Women?' Final Report of the Local Government Commission, July 2017, Fawcett and LGiU

17 Reina Lawrence was elected to Camden Borough Council in 1907, the first year women were able to stand for council elections, Camden New Journal, 13 December 1907

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The choice of whom to elect has to remain with the local electorate. Yet councils have an important role to play in working with local political parties, the media, other key institutions and the local community to understand and address barriers that create resistance to equal participation. Understanding and raising awareness of the positive impact that having greater representation of women, parents and carers in decision-making will have is an essential starting point.

Why does it matter?

Achieving equal participation of women, parents and carers is critical to the good functioning of our democracy. The international evidence base is clear that where women have greater representation societies are more equitable, have higher standards of living and positive development in education, health and infrastructure and a decrease in political corruption[18].

At a local level the equal participation of women, parents and carers in political decision-making is essential to improving the lives of all the women, men and children in our communities:

Councils are best placed to take decisions that are in the best interest of supporting their communities when councillors as a group reflect the diversity of experiences and needs of those communities.

- Councils will more effectively garner the support and engagement of the communities they serve when they reflect them.
- Councils play a vital role in providing services upon which local communities depend and are increasingly taking very challenging decisions about how we prioritise those services. Greater diversity of experiences, knowledge and skills brings a greater range of ideas to the table about what matters most and finding potential solutions.
- The work of councillors today requires a greater breadth, range and quality of skills[19] than it has in the past, recruiting from the full diversity of the local community is essential to attract talented councillors.

18 'Women, power and politics: what's changed in 100 years? A study commemorating 100 years of women's right to vote', The British Council, October 2018

19 'The 21st century councillor', Catherine Mangan, Catherine Needham, Karin Bottom and Steven Parker, University of Birmingham Public Service Academy, 2016

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- Women make up 51 per cent of the population and within that have diverse experiences, characteristics and belonging within many different communities, be that race or ethnic minority, religion, age, disability, or other characteristics.
- Evidence demonstrates that when women are able to access political decision-making they bring agendas to the table that could otherwise be missed. This has been the case for example with violence against women and girls and the gender pay gap[20].

Making changes to the way councils operate to address the barriers that councillors who have parental and/or caring responsibilities say stop them becoming involved has the potential to make an environment that is better and more attractive for all:

- Many men, as well as women, want to be able to take on more parenting responsibilities for their families within their lives[21], and it is the reality that councillors are increasingly likely to have other caring responsibilities due to the aging population.
- Carers UK estimates that we will see a 40 per cent rise in the number of carers needed by 2037, to nine million unpaid carers[22].
- Councillor retention will improve by making public office more accessible within the lived reality for women, parents and carers and others who feel excluded from it.
- Smarter, more efficient and remote working arrangements for councillors have the potential to relieve pressure on space, transport and services, aligning with workplace change for the council workforce.
- With increasing expectations on councillors to be visible and accessible to the public 24/7 and through social media, change can support councils to understand these pressures and ensure councillors thrive in a safe and supportive environment.

20 'Women, power and politics: what's changed in 100 years? A study commemorating 100 years of women's right to vote', The British Council, October 2018

21 'Fathers and the workplace', 1st Report, Women and Equalities Committee, UK Parliament, March 2018

22 http://www.carersuk.org/images/Facts_about_Carers_2015.pdf

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The legal framework

International commitments

Removing the barriers to the equal participation of women in political decision-making at all levels is enshrined in the UK as signatory to the Convention of the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, adopted by UN 1979), Beijing Platform for Action (UN, 1995) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, UN 2015).

In particular SDG target 5.5: "Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life".

Legal framework in England and Wales

The Equality Act 2010, which applies to councillors and council officers, says you must not be discriminated against because:

- you are (or are not) a particular sex
- someone thinks you are the opposite sex (this is known as discrimination by perception)
- you are connected to someone of a particular sex (this is known as discrimination by association)

In the Equality Act, sex can mean either male or female, or a group of people such as men or boys or women or girls. https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/sex-discrimination

The Nolan Principles of public life https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life/the-7-principles-of-public-life--2

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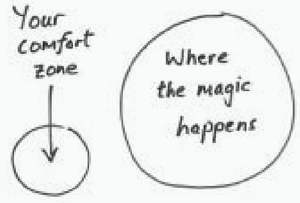
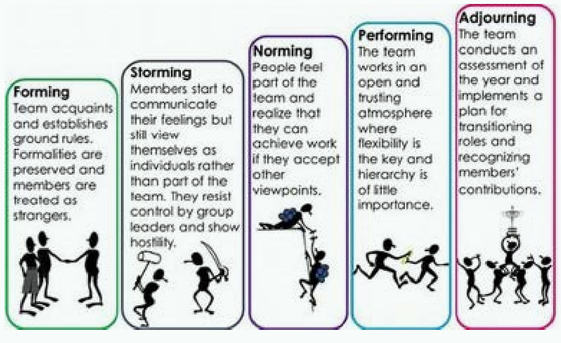
Step 2: Understanding the process of change

Change in any context is challenging. Reviewing a council's structures and ways of operating and behaving to respond to the needs of women, parents and carers and be family-friendly is no exception. This toolkit is designed to make the process as manageable as possible, breaking down the change journey into small practical steps and enabling you to scale to fit the resources you have available.

Effective, sustainable change requires thinking about the whole system and working to change mindsets and behaviours. The change journey has different, often recognisable stages, some of which tend to be 'uncomfortable' and which the people engaged in change will go through at different points and times. Change is usually uncomfortable.



Often the process of experiencing change is understood through Fisher's personal transition curve. And often as a process of forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning[23]:



23 Dr Bruce Tuckman, 1965

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The necessary transformation of local councils and their services in recent years speaks volumes about the ability of councils and councillors to make change happen. Yet it also needs to be acknowledged that some changes can still be slow.

Some principles that may help to guide a positive change journey:

1. **Outcome focused**: know the shared outcome you are wanting to achieve and communicate relentlessly in terms of the benefits it will deliver. Outcomes can be dynamic and may change but always keep communicating.
2. **Shared ownership**: not all stakeholders have to be involved all of the time but know who they are, what their influence is, support them to own the agenda and know what it is they need to do.
3. **Value everyone's perceptions**: take time to understand what stakeholder perceptions of the current picture are, what they think needs to happen and how. Curiosity and appreciation will see all information as useful.
4. **Create a collective alignment of what better looks like**: strengths-based conversations help take stakeholders from their individual perception to a bigger, joined up picture of where you want to be, enabling disengagement from the current in pursuit of the shared outcome.
5. **Work with the whole**: institutional and systemic change requires working with both the written and unwritten rules, the visible and invisible about the cultures we work within. Be open to everything that people bring in their understanding of the current situation and what they want to have happen.
6. **Know what is in your control**: the local council is only one part of a complex system for engaging women, parents and carers. It's important to know what is within your power to change, take responsibility for that and identify where you exercise influence over others to seed wider change.
7. **Be open about learning**: not everything will work, learn as you go along, reflect and review and be open about the things that are tried, that don't work and what you will do differently.

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Step 3: Bringing others on board and creating shared ownership

One person will be unable to complete this improvement process effectively on their own. Who else to involve depends on a number of factors:

1. Who will bring leadership and influence?
2. What resources do you need and who has capacity to support the process?
3. Who else cares about this agenda? Who has a stake or influence in the wider system to ensure broad engagement and adoption?
4. Who do you already know who you can easily contact and bring on board?

Who will bring leadership and influence?

Leadership across this process of improvement is essential. Change needs to be supported by those able to make change happen from 'the top'. Undertaking this toolkit will require some allocation of resources, including time and energy; it may result in policy changes and long-term accountability needs to be in place to monitor and evaluate the impact. It's important to consider how this agenda fits with key leadership, council and corporate priorities, and the wider contribution it could make to achieving these ambitions.

Think about bringing on board:

- the council leader or deputy leader
- cabinet members, including anyone with a portfolio covering democracy and participation; or women, gender or equalities; or modernising the workplace
- leadership from a cross-party group of councillors
- scrutiny or other committee leadership with responsibility for democracy and participation, equalities or modernising the workplace.

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Who has capacity to support the process?

Depending on where you want to make changes you will need the support and resources of a range of council officers as the toolkit progresses, for example to help gather information, communicate change or create new policies. They may not be needed all of the time or at the beginning of the process but it is helpful to think about what might be required and who you would contact.

Think about bringing on board:

- democratic or member services
- equalities team or lead officer
- communications
- HR, finance and legal
- do you need any external facilitation to support the process effectively?

Who else cares about this agenda? Who has a stake or influence in the wider system to ensure broad engagement and adoption?

This toolkit is based on a model of open and inclusive participation of stakeholders. While the approach will vary from council to council it is important to identify the full range of stakeholders, both inside and outside of the council to create common ground and ownership for the outcomes.

Reaching out to a wide range of diverse stakeholders will secure a range of perspectives to draw from in creating solutions and there will be considerable expertise outside of the council and in the community. It's important to recognise that the experiences of women, parents and carers are diverse and successful change will require as full a range of possible of these perspectives to be understood.

Think about getting views from:

- former councillors, particularly women, parents or carers
- previous and current council candidates

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- local political party officers, and representatives of political parties not currently serving on the council
- local women's civil society organisations and campaign groups, including those working to support specific groups of women such as BME or disabled women
- women's business and other networks or infrastructure organisations
- other civil society organisations, particularly those focusing on democracy and parenting and families
- experts in gender, parenting and creating modern, family-friendly workplaces for example from local universities or other local, regional or national organisations
- local media organisations who have a significant role to play in the representation of women, parents and carers and communicating change to the community
- young people through local youth councils or other local youth organisations.

Who else do you know who may helpfully support this process?

The above list will not be exhaustive, there will be other local stakeholders you want to include. With any change it's important to think particularly about who may be motivated. They may not be the 'usual suspects' in terms of stakeholders, but they could make a valuable contribution to getting things done.

Forming a core leadership group or team

Once you have identified all stakeholders you will find it useful to identify those who will work at the core of making this improvement happen. These may be both internal and external stakeholders depending on your local situation. You will function well if you have a clear 'terms of reference' defining the scope and role of the group.

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Step 4: Do the Preparation

Further detail is offered here on key elements to support your preparation process to include how you make a plan, collect data and structure and communicate the conversation. These models are suggestions. How extensive and detailed your plan is will depend on the scale and type of resources available to you and local ambitions. This section covers:

- scale of your programme or project
- collecting data and other sources
- communicating the conversation
- structuring strengths-based conversations for change and action planning.

Scale of your programme or project

In developing a plan it is important to think about how long you are going to take to complete the process of working through the toolkit and how much time and resource you have available to do that. It is also important to consider how this falls in the calendar year, business of the council and election cycle.

Collecting data and other sources

Understanding your local picture through the data and evidence is essential. This means considering and gathering the following types of data and other sources to support your conversations:

- What **quantitative data** do you have on the representation of women, parents and carers? Can you disaggregate this data by other protected characteristics? Are you able to make comparisons with national data?
- What **qualitative data** is available on people's experiences and perceptions of the current picture and their experiences?
- Which **policies and protocols** that impact on women, parents and carers in their role as councillors would it be helpful to consider? See checklist at appendix 1.

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Data gathering is unlikely to be a simple process and you are unlikely to have everything at the outset of your work. The dataset will grow as you work through the toolkit and thematic conversations with stakeholders. If possible it would be helpful to use any data gathering as a baseline setting exercise and create the mechanisms for the gathering to be repeated, more easily, in the future.

Quantitative and qualitative data can be sourced from both national sources and locally. National data will be useful for making comparisons. There are also key research studies identifying the barriers experienced by women, and as parents or carers to local political participation, see the 'Further Resources' section.

When collating, collecting or analysing data it is important to consider the requirements under data protection, freedom of information and the guidance on GDPR available from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) on the general data protection regulation.

- Appendix 2 identifies a suggested core dataset to create for use in the conversations.
- Appendix 3 includes a short set of survey questions that could be used for gathering anonymous, qualitative date from councillors. This could form an important part of understanding experiences, perceptions and attitudes.

Communicating the conversation

Communication is critical to bringing others on board and creating shared ownership. Setting out clearly the scope, timings and how you are going about this process will be key. It may be useful to consider the following when planning communications:

- Which audiences are you communicating with and how will you reach and involve them?
- What voices are missing from the conversation? Are men around the table? Ensure dialogue is not just between women, parents and carers. Are there people speaking from experience across the range of protected characteristics?
- What are the key messages, and are they focused on the benefits of the change? Can you demonstrate these with real, local stories?
- Can you use film and events as well as written information to share these messages and stories?

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- How could you build knowledge and awareness gradually? Are there specific events to communicate key messages? (there is a list of useful dates in 'Further Resources')
- At which points and how do you want to receive feedback, evidence or other input from stakeholders? Will you consult on any part of the process?
- Are any of your key stakeholders very active on social media? How can they champion your messages?
- Do you need any expertise or additional capacity to support communication?
- Can you interest the local media, i.e. both traditional and social media influencers?
- Do you need to think about how to respond positively to negative feedback or responses?
- Do you want to set up a dedicated webpage, social media accounts or hashtags to support people to engage with the conversation as it progresses? And to publish the work in progress as it develops?

Structuring strengths-based conversations for change and action planning

Strengths-based conversations can enable an informed view of the current situation to be established from a wide range of perspectives. They can focus on gathering information on what is working well and provide a means of engaging and motivating stakeholders towards the end outcomes. While these conversations should therefore not become focused on problems or what is missing, they should still enable stakeholders to share their individual experiences and perspectives in a meaningful way.

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Steps 5-8: A thematic approach

This toolkit takes a thematic and conversational approach to self-assessment and action planning.

Theme 1: Understand your local picture
Theme 2: Leadership & power
Theme 3: Flexible and family-friendly workplace
Theme 4: Culture & conduct
Theme 5: Supporting women, parents and carers

Each theme can be the topic of a specific meeting, or of a task group meeting. Other means could be used, such as through social media, to open up the conversation to others outside of the room. How the discussion is structured and facilitated will depend on the number of stakeholders around the table and the time available.

The following steps can be used to guide you through the self-assessment and action planning process:

Step 5 **Understanding the current picture**	**Step 6** **Creating a vision of what will be different**	**Step 7** **Developing solutions to get there**	**Step 8** **Understand what resource is needed & how you will**
Each theme has Key Questions to frame the data and discussion. What strengths should the council celebrate? What good practice can you share with others, including the LGA?	Knowing this what do you want to be different? What are you going to change to get there?	How can you build on existing strengths to create this change? What are other options for creating this change? Which option(s) will you prioritise?	What support or resources do you need to make those changes? Who is responsible? When will this change(s) be made by? How will you know when the change has been

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Once discussion has been completed on each thematic section and the proposed action planning is complete the council will need to agree how to use and agree these findings. This is a matter for individual councils to agree what is needed.

See action plan template in Appendix 4

Theme 1: Understand your current picture

To think about what's working and not working and future improvement it is important to understand the current picture.

Key Questions:

1. Do you have data on the number of councillors who are women, parents/carers and/or carers of dependent adults? What does your data tell you?
2. How does the makeup of your council reflect the community you serve?
3. Have you published the data or otherwise shared it with key stakeholders?
4. How has the council already signalled its commitment to being a family-friendly workplace and/or increasing the representation of women as councillors? This could include public commitments, policy or motions. Is there someone in a leadership position, such as within the Cabinet, with a leadership responsibility for this agenda?
5. What do you know, from survey or other data, about any barriers women and parents/carers experience in becoming a councillor locally?

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The National Picture

Thirty-four per cent of elected local councillors in England are women[24] and five per cent increase in the number of women councillors in England in the last 20 years. In 2013, 28 per cent of serving Councillors reported having one or more caring responsibility, 14.5 per cent were caring for children.

Women's representation varies by type of local authority and by region: women are 27 per cent of county councillors, 32 per cent of shire district councillors and 32 per cent of unitary councillors, 39 per cent of metropolitan borough and 37 per cent of London borough councillors. Women are most underrepresented within 18-34 year olds, where 3.5 times as many men are councillors as women.

Black, Asian, and minority ethnic women are underrepresented in local government. 5.5 per cent of women councillors identify as BAME (14 per cent of the England and Wales population identifies as BAME).[25]

According to the Local Government Commission Report, 2016: nineteen per cent of female councillors say they have a disability or long-term health condition.

Opportunities for change to consider, you could:

- Agree (and communicate) a vision as a council for what you'd like diversity on your council to look like, such as taking into account data on local demographics.
- Create leadership by giving specific responsibility to a lead, named lead member or committee chair for example Cabinet member for democratic services, the committee chair responsible for reviewing or an equalities lead member.
- Publish a policy statement on how action will be taken to remove obstacles to the participation of councillors with parenting or caring responsibilities.

24 https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/womens-representation-in-local-government-stuck-in-the-past

25 Local Government Commission

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- Be explicit in all relevant communications that the majority of a councillor's role and responsibilities, including those in leadership positions, can be fulfilled flexibly alongside other responsibilities.
- Incorporate/ Integrate action on the diversity of representation of councillors within the council's equality and diversity strategy or framework, potentially undertaking a gender audit of the council that considers all policy areas and compares gender and diversity policies, procedures and protocols for councillors with those for council staff.
- Make a formal commitment to gender diversity in local government. Collect, review and publish data on the numbers of councillors by gender, with parenting/caring responsibilities and all other protected characteristics, for example after each local election (Check GDPR requirements).

Action planning questions:

- What strengths should the council celebrate? What good practice can you share with others, including the LGA?
- What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?
- Knowing this what do you want to be different? What are you going to change to get there?
- What are your options for creating this change? What existing strengths can you build on? Which option(s) will you prioritise?
- What support or resources do you need to make those changes? Who is responsible? When will they be made by?
- How will you know when the change has been achieved?

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Theme 2: Leadership and Power

Consider the way the council's policies, practices and systems support women and those with caring responsibilities into leadership positions to create gender balance and diversity across the council's leadership.

Key Questions:

- Do you have data on the proportion of scrutiny chairs, executive embers and any other leadership roles (including equalities leads and ceremonial roles) that are currently filled by councillors who are women, parents/carers and/or carers of dependent adults?
- Does or has your council ever had a woman leader?
- Does current representation on committees and in leadership roles reinforce gender stereotypes? For example, with women less represented in committees/roles focusing on economy, transport and skills and men less represented in decision-making around children and young people or care?
- Has the council reviewed the design of leadership roles to include opportunities to design in greater flexibility to senior roles, such as part-time or job-share? Does the council offer all senior roles as flexible working and part-time by default, unless there is a clear business case otherwise? Does the council demonstrate an organisational commitment to viewing flexible working on equal terms with traditional working patterns?
- How are positions of leadership allocated? Have any obstacles been identified and addressed in access to positions of leadership for women, parents and carers. Does the council proactively let women, parent and carers candidates know that they will be supported in council leadership positions?

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The National Picture

As of May 2018 18 per cent of council leaders in England are women[26] and 18 per cent of council leaders in Wales are women[27].

According to the Local Government Commission Report 2016, when asked why there are few female council leaders, 42 per cent of women in the sample felt that women councillors were pigeonholed into particular roles, 39 per cent felt that council culture holds them back from showing their talents, and 29 per cent felt that sexism from other councillors plays a significant part. [28]

Opportunities for change to consider, you could:

- Seek cross-party commitment for greater representation of women and parents/carers in leadership roles.
- Consider and promote how action can and will be taken in designing leadership positions to remove obstacles to the participation of councillors with parenting or caring responsibilities in leadership positions.
- Ensure the design of leadership programmes and support for all councillors and those in leadership positions considers any issues you may have identified regarding the barriers women, parents or those with caring responsibilities experience and fully reflects the breadth of skills, knowledge and experience required for leadership.
- Collect, review and publish data on the council's leadership roles by gender, parenting/caring responsibilities and all other protected characteristics, on an annual basis.

Action planning questions:

1. What strengths should the council celebrate? What good practice can you share with others, including the LGA?

26 https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/news/womens-representation-in-local-government-stuck-in-the-past

27 https://www.wlga.wales/welsh-local-authority-links

28 https://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/local-government-commission

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2. What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?
3. Knowing this what do you want to be different? What are you going to change to get there?
4. What are your options for creating this change? What existing strengths can you build on? Which option(s) will you prioritise?
5. What support or resources do you need to make those changes? Who is responsible? When will they be made by?
6. How will you know when the change has been achieved?
7. How will you know when the change has been made?

Theme 3: Flexible and Family-Friendly Workplace

Consider how the council operates flexible working practices that respond to the realities of councillors' lives, in particular to foster acceptance of the need to balance work with parenting and caring responsibilities.

Key Questions:

- How do the council building(s) (i.e. physical spaces councillors are working within) and its services cater to the needs of women and parents/ carers as councillors? For instance, is it family-friendly for councillors with babies and young children? Is there provision for breastfeeding mothers, childcare provision or a family room?
- Are there comprehensive policies in place on maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave, child care, and dependent care? Are these widely known, understood, easily accessed and well implemented?
- What are existing councillor attitudes regarding caring responsibilities and family commitments? Are these vocalised? Is there a strong will to cater for their differing needs? Does this differ for men and women or depending on any other protected characteristics?
- How much flexibility is there currently around where, when and how meetings take place? Do you make use of technology for example video and telephone conferencing to enable efficient and effective remote working including remote attendance at meetings? Are councillors with

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babies and small children able to bring them with them to meetings?

- Is notice of meetings circulated with ample time to enable councillors with parenting and caring responsibilities to organise child or dependent care? Are meeting agendas and papers consistently received (in electronic or paper form) in a timely way to enable good preparation and participation?

The National Picture

According to the Local Government Commission Report 2016, within their role as a councillor, 28 per cent of women and 18 per cent of men report childcare as a barrier. Forty-seven per cent of women report clashes with other caring commitments. Thirty-two per cent of women aged 35-44 say that childcare was 'often' a problem, while 'clashes with other caring commitments' is a bigger issue for women aged 45 and over. A 'lack of maternity/paternity provisions or support' is a barrier for women aged 18 to 44, a third of whom (compared with 16 per cent of men in the age group) say it holds them back in fulfilling their role as a councillor[29]. For women on county councils, one of the biggest challenges is travel; the distances to meetings are an issue for almost half of them. Other issues include meeting times, with almost two thirds of women councillors feel that changing this will bring more women in.

Opportunities for change to consider, you could:

- Review meeting times and location with existing members to ensure they are family friendly and enable the inclusive participation of councillors with parenting and caring responsibilities. This would include the requirements of disabled councillors for reasonable adjustments. For example some democratic services teams regularly survey councillors to identify the most mutually convenient meeting times.

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- Increase access to and the use of technology, including telephone and video conferencing, to enable more flexible and efficient remote working and participation. For example, consider how to address a default requirement or assumption for meetings to happen face-to-face. It should be noted that at the time of publication, it is not possible for councillors to vote remotely.
- Consider clear standards for meeting practice that enable participation and attendance by all councillors. For example, giving clear advance notice of meetings and timely circulation of agendas and papers. This will give councillors with parenting and caring responsibilities ample time to organise child or dependent care.
- Review the council's maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave policy against the council's policy for officers.
- Have a clear policy and culture encouraging councillors to ask for flexibility and to claim childcare costs and adult dependent care costs to enable them to meet their caring responsibilities. For example, develop a council's carer policy to include a comprehensive dependent carers' allowance scheme covering (some or all) childcare and adult dependent care costs.
- Ensure all cabinet members continue to receive their basic allowance, and special responsibility allowance where applicable, during any period of maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave. For example, see the LGA Labour Group model parental leave policy for councils.
- Audit/review the working environment, for example, against the IPU 'gender-sensitive parliaments' checklist and/or The Good Parliament shopping list of recommendations.
- Cross reference the council's workplace policies and practices for councillors with working practices across the rest of the council.

Action planning questions:

1. What should the council celebrate? What good practice can you share with others, including the LGA?
2. What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?
3. Knowing this what are you going to change?
4. What are your options for creating that change? Which option will you prioritise?
5. What support or resources do you need to make those changes?
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Theme 4: Culture and Conduct

Consider how the council fosters an internal culture through its policies, practices and codes of conduct.

Key Questions:

- Does the council have an anti-harassment policy and a mechanism to address complaints of harassment and discrimination? Have complaints been resolved efficiently and effectively? Is there a policy against discrimination? Are incidents treated with due seriousness and addressed in appropriate and timely manner?
- Have any women councillors, or councillors with family or caring responsibilities, raised concerns about abuse or harassment?
- Does the council foster an internal culture that does not tolerate sexist or other behaviour that discriminates against councillors on account of their gender or other protected characteristics? Are the voices of women, parents and carers consistently heard and acknowledged?
- Does the council provide support to their councillors, particularly women councillors, to help them understand the legal protection available against online and offline abuse and harassment? Is the council working with its local police forces to ensure there are formal mechanisms to report and follow through on incidents of abuse and harassment?

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The National Picture

According to the Local Government Commission Report, 2016, 13 per cent of women and eight per cent of men have identified 'fear of violence' as a barrier to standing for election. Forty-six per cent of women and 35 per cent of men also identified 'harassment or abuse from the electorate as barriers to standing for election. A third of women stated that they have experienced sexist comments in the council chamber. One in 10 women councillors have reported sexual harassment from other councillors, particularly women aged 35-44. Women councillors are more likely to report that their contributions are ignored or not valued with 63 per cent of women councillors have said that their contributions are ignored or not valued, compared with 52 per cent of men. Forty-four per cent of women say they felt a lack of confidence in making their voice heard.

Opportunities for change to consider, you could:

- Review, where appropriate, council data on complaints to see what learning you can take from it.
- Review current policies and mechanisms for addressing complaints. For example, the council's anti-harassment policy and mechanism to address complaints of harassment and discrimination. Consider how complaints can be resolved more efficiently and effectively.
- Does there need to be a clearer policy against discrimination? Review your standards and complaints procedures to ensure councillors are empowered to speak up, and that issues are actively resolved.
- Review the current code of conduct promoting equality and/or prohibiting sex discrimination and sexist behaviour. Ensure the code of conduct works well for other protected characteristics and how they may interact. Consider whether the code is used effectively in practice to ensure appropriate behaviour.
- Increase awareness of and access to relevant codes, policies and to the support and complaint procedures available through an effective communication strategy/campaign. Measure attitudes to women, parents and carers through an anonymous survey.

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- Review councillor induction processes and ensure that it clearly and consistently sets out acceptable standards, including providing regular and appropriate training, and ensuring transparency so that behaviour can be effectively monitored.
- Arrange systems coaching, facilitated discussion or training for councillors to explore behaviour and conduct and to support a cultural change. For example, this could include running unconscious bias training for councillors including councillors in leadership roles. Discuss gender equality with all members and encourage both male and female councillors to participate in sessions around gender equality and report poor behaviour.

Action planning questions:

1. What should the council celebrate? What good practice can you share with others, including the LGA?
2. What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?
3. Knowing this what are you going to change?
4. What are your options for creating that change? Which option will you prioritise?
5. What support or resources do you need to make those changes?
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Theme 5: Supporting women, parents and carers

Consider how effectively the council supports women, parents and carers to enter, progress and lead in local government. Consider how the council promotes the benefits to democracy and to the 'business' of the council, of having a diverse and representative body of councillors.

Key questions

- How does the council promote the role and work of all councillors? Include working with the media and others to ensure the full diversity of local people serving as councillors, including women and those with caring responsibilities are heard, seen, promoted and celebrated as role models.
- Are the additional barriers that councillors with caring responsibilities face openly acknowledged on the council? Are councillors alert to the disproportionate impact this has on women councillors and where multiple barriers intersect? How effectively does the council discuss and raise awareness of these barriers?
- Does the council invest in and support a diversity of councillors, in particular women and those with caring responsibilities? For example, through quality induction, mentoring, buddying, women's networks, learning and development?
- Does the council consciously reach out, cross-party, in collaboration with civil society organisations, particularly within the women's sector, to promote and engage women and those with caring responsibilities to encourage them to be a councillor?

The National Picture

According to the Local Government Commission Report, 2016: Women councillors are as likely to want to stand again and to want to progress to senior roles as male councillors. Women and men are equally as likely to say their reasons for standing were because someone asked them to, or because they were inspired by someone. Women are more likely than men to become councillors following involvement in a community organisation, religious institution or charity. Community and voluntary organisations are important pools

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of prospective female talent. Almost half of women (47 per cent) say a lack of access to informal networks is a barrier to them as councillors, compared with 36 per cent of men. Councillors feel mentoring, confidence-boosting measures and women's networks would be helpful. [30] One in four women and one in seven men provided care for someone in the last week. In 2016 to 2017, 65 per cent of men and 60 per cent of women aged 52 to 64 years of age who were carers were also in work.[31]

Opportunities for change to consider, you could:

- Run, host or fund workshops or training for people interested in becoming a councillor to help demystify the process and role and to encourage women to stand. Does the council promote and support engagement in training opportunities and in regional, cross-party, gender equality networks open to councillors? For example, the LGA Be A Councillor programme, the Leadership Academy and other councillor training opportunities?
- Review your current induction programme to ensure effective support is in place to include an active sponsorship scheme or mentoring for all new councillors, as well as support to ensure parents/carers and women councillors in particular are encouraged to take them up, to help them progress.
- Support and facilitate the building of councillor networks, in particular between women councillors and councillors with families or caring responsibilities, both internally and externally, to grow peer to peer support. This could extend to networks across the whole council, bringing councillors and officers together, for example, as parents/carers and women and offering shared leadership and development opportunities.
- Invest in technology to support flexible working, training, induction, feedback, participation, communication and community building. For example, make phone and video conferencing readily available on develop accessible online community platforms.
- Review the amount of public exposure given to councillors, including media opportunities, public speaking and panels, paying attention to potential underexposure of parents/carers

30 Findings of the Local Government Commission

31 https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/livinglongerhowourpopulationischangingandwhyitmatters/fittingitallinworkingcaringandhealthinlaterlife

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and women. Offer training opportunities and practice, with priority given to parents/carers and women and underrepresented groups. For example, public speaking coaching, media and social media training and support. Invest in training to support skills of 21st Century Councillor

- Celebrate and promote the different skills and experiences that women councillors and councillors with caring responsibilities bring to their roles on the council. For example, actively promote them as role models internally and externally, such as with local schools, community groups and business. Actively encourage them to take a visible lead when celebrating specific events such as Mother's Day or Father's Day, International Women's Day, Democracy Week, Carers' Week, etc.

Action planning questions:

1. What should the council celebrate? What good practice can you share with others, including the LGA?
2. What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?
3. Knowing this what are you going to change?
4. What are your options for creating that change? Which option will you prioritise?
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STEP 9
MONITORING AND REVIEWING

Step 9: Monitoring and reviewing

Once the toolkit has been completed and an action plan agreed, it is up to the council to decide how to use the findings. The LGA encourages councils to publish their findings, so that their actions are accountable to their communities. It may be that the council chooses to publish the action plan along with timescales for review and any comments on progress.

To bolster accountability and ensure there is a clear process for reviewing progress, the council may wish to report their findings to the relevant scrutiny or policy committee.

To ensure that there is a cycle of continuous improvement, it is recommended that councils build in regular (for example quarterly or six-monthly) progress reviews.

The toolkit should be viewed as a useful tool for self-assessment and improvement. Please do let the LGA know if you complete the toolkit, so that we can share your best practice, signpost you to other best practice or put you in touch with councils who have experience in the areas that you are working to improve.

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Continuing the conversation

There are many routes through which the conversation could be continued. Below are a suggestion of possible dates and events that may be useful in hosting further conversations with councillors and the community.

Date	Event
6 Feb	Anniversary of the 1918 passing of the Representation of the People Act, giving (some) women the vote for the first time.
8th March	**International Women's Day** www.internationalwomensday.com
June	**Carers' Week** www.carersweek.org
July (usually 1st week)	**National Democracy Week, UK** https://democracyweek.campaign.gov.uk
October	**Local Democracy Week (European)** www.congress-eldw.eu
11 October	**International Day of the Girl Child** www.un.org/en/events/girlchild
November	**UK Parliament Week** www.ukparliamentweek.org
12 December	In 1907 Reina Lawrence was the first woman elected to a council in England
INSERT	Date when the first woman elected to your council
INSERT	Date when the first woman served as council leader or mayor

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LGA support

LGA Be A Councillor Campaign

Offering a range of materials and tools that can be tailored to bespoke local campaigns, taking into account factors such as the culture, society and geography of specific areas. Events are also held to identify and contribute to reducing the barriers faced by individuals considering standing for election, publicising the role of the local elected representative and increasing and diversifying the pool of candidates from which the electorate choose.

Other useful support

The EnAble Fund

The Fund, provided by the Government Equalities Office and administered by Disability Rights UK, is intended to cover the additional financial costs associated with a disability or health condition, that would otherwise prevent someone from seeking elected office. The Fund was launched on 3 December 2018.

The Parliament Project

A non-partisan project to inspire, empower and encourage women to run for political office in the UK. Focusing on practical, hands-on training and support, the project runs workshops and webinars to demystify the process for women wanting to get involved in politics and online peer support circles to support women's political ambitions more deeply. Active across England and Scotland.

Pregnant then Elected

A UK based project which encourages and supports more mothers to start a career in politics.

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Other useful resources

Census of Local Authority Councillors 2013, LGA

Centre for Women and Democracy (closed, resources still available)

Does Local Government Work for Women? Final Report of the Local Government Commission, July 2017, Fawcett and LGiU

European Institute for Gender Equality

Gender Sensitive Parliament: A Global Review of Good Practice, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011

Power to the people? Tackling the gender imbalances in Combined Authorities and Local Government, IPPR, August 2017

State of Caring 2018, Carers UK

Suffrage Pioneers 1918-2018, Women's Local Government Society

The Modern Families Index 2017 (annual), Working Families

Women, Power, Politics: what's changed in 100 years?, British Council, October 2018

Women in Parliament and Government, Briefing Paper SN01250, July 2018, House of Commons Library

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Definitions

Unpaid Carer	A carer is anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid. When we refer to carers in this document, this is inclusive of both adult and young carers.[32]
Strengths-based conversation	A strengths-based approach looks first at what people can do with their skills and their resources and what can the people around them do in their relationships and their communities as well astheir personal resources, abilities, skills, knowledge, potential, etc.[33]
Pipeline	Describes a visible system of identifying candidates and supporting them into the political landscape.
Sex discrimination	Protection in law when you are treated differently because of your sex, the treatment does not have to be intentional to be unlawful.
Protected characteristics	Legal protection from discrimination is given by the Equality Act 2010 on the basis of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

32 https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carers/

33 https://www.scie.org.uk/strengths-based-approaches/guidance

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Appendix 1: checklist of policies and protocols

- ☐ Maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave policies (Fawcett Society found only four per cent of councils responding had these in 2017)
- ☐ Code of Conduct, and any separate code concerning sexual harassment and anti-discrimination that is specific to councillors
- ☐ Childcare costs policy or dependent carers' allowance scheme
- ☐ Policy or practice on virtual meetings and attendance (where allowable)
- ☐ Councillor training and induction programmes, details of mentoring or councillor sponsorship or buddying schemes in operation, information on any leadership schemes
- ☐ Any constitutional requirements or council motions passed on cabinet membership and diversity, and other committee chair roles
- ☐ Any other standing orders or internal rules relevant to women, parents and carers
- ☐ Council equalities plan or scheme

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Appendix 2: creating a core dataset

Sources of national data

There is currently no statutory requirement to collate data on the representation of councillors in England and Wales (section 106 of the Equality Act requires political parties to publish information on the protected characteristics of all candidates, to date this has not been enacted, and applies only to national parliamentary elections). The particular sources of national data recommended are:

- The LGA National Census of Councillors provides the most comprehensive 'snapshot' of local government representation, and analysis of trends over time. It asks councillors about their council work, their views on a range of issues and their personal background. Most recent results due in early 2019.
- Does Local Government Work for Women? Final Report of the Local Government Commission, 2017, Fawcett Society and LGiU, with updated data in 2018
- The LGA's LGinform for reports and trends in local government, your local area and beyond, including the gender pay gap, etc.

Sources of local data – the council

Quantitative data

- Local population statistics and equalities profile, including local data sets and Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs).
- Numbers and per cent of councillors who are female, numbers and per cent of councillors who are parents and/or carers (this data may require a survey to gather)
- Disaggregation and analysis of this data by other protected characteristics, depending on what data is available. The protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

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- Numbers and per cent of females, parents and carers in leadership positions:
  - Leader, deputy leader
  - Cabinet make-up, including portfolios (due to the often gendered nature)
  - Committee chairs
  - Group leaders
  - Ceremonial positions, i.e. lord mayor/ lady mayoress
  - any other office holders
- Numbers and per cent of committee members who are female, parents and carers, with committee subjects

Qualitative data

- Is there any councillor survey data on their experience of being a councillor and/or the way the council works? Can this be disaggregated by sex and for parents and carers?
- Is there any data from reviews undertaken or consultations on meeting times and arrangements, councillor use of technology or other workplace initiatives?
- Is there any information to be sourced from a Standards Committee regarding the number and nature of complaints or issues raised?
- Is there any evidence from relevant debates the council may have held in relation to gender equality, parenting or family friendly policies, including national or international commitments? These could be in relation to International Women's Day, UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women or the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Other possible sources of local data

The following information may be available from political groups or parties, or a local civil society women's organisation:

- Number of candidates in recent elections by sex, and if available how many/ what per cent were parents and carers? Can this data be disaggregated by other protected characteristics?

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- Candidates for any mayoral election by sex, and if available how many/ whatper cent were parents and carers? Can this data be disaggregated by other protected characteristics?
- Local party initiatives to increase and support the representation of women, parents and carers, such as all women shortlists or other action plans in place from local parties.
- Any local events supporting women to get elected, such as those delivered by 50:50 Parliament and The Parliament Project. Is there any feedback? How many women attended?
- Any other studies by local groups?
  For example, in Bristol the local Bristol Fawcett Group produced 'The Right Man for Bristol' in 2012, analysing leadership and decision-making on the local area
- Any other data political parties or third party organisations may hold that may be relevant?

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Appendix 3: example survey for qualitative data

Gathering data by survey from councillors can be time and resource intense. However, it can also be an important means of offering councillors a space to input anonymously, and a useful way to capture attitudinal data as well as information on experiences. The survey could also be used as a means of raising the profile of the toolkit work being done. Including questions on the suitability and barriers in relation to existing meeting times could also be a helpful exercise to engage all councillors in.

The key to a good quality survey that is not too big a burden is:

- keep the questions focused and specific
- use closed (yes/no, multiple choice or ranking) questions where appropriate
- administer electronically, offering anonymity, but remember to ask for information from the responder on issues such as sex, and whether they have parent or carer responsibilities
- allow sufficient space for qualitative answers to be included for those who want to.

Draft survey

Questions can be added or deleted

Enabling and supporting women, parents and carers to stand and serve in local government

1. Do you think the makeup of the council reflects the community you serve?
2. Do you think women and parents/carers experience additional barriers:
   a. To becoming a councillor locally?
   b. To staying on as a councillor?
   c. To positions of leadership on the council?
3. Do you think current leadership roles are offered with sufficient flexibility, such as part-time or job-share opportunities?

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4. Does current representation on committees and in leadership roles reinforce gender stereotypes? For example, with women less represented in committees/roles focusing on economy, transport and skills and men less represented in decision-making around children and young people or care?
5. Do the council building(s) (i.e. physical spaces councillors are working within) and its services cater to the needs of women and parents/ carers as councillors? For example, is it family-friendly for councillors with babies and young children? Is there provision for breastfeeding mothers, childcare provision or a family room?
6. Are there comprehensive policies in place on maternity, paternity, adoption and parental leave, child care, and dependent care?
7. Are these widely known, understood, easily accessed and well implemented?
8. Is there a strong will amongst other councillors to cater for the differing needs of women, parents or carers?
9. Is there sufficient flexibility around where, when and how meetings take place? For example, do you make use of technology for example video and telephone conferencing to enable efficient and effective remote working including remote attendance at meetings?
10. Are meeting agendas, papers and notice consistently received in a timely way and with sufficient notice to enable good preparation and participation?
11. Does the council foster an internal culture that does not tolerate sexist or other behaviour that discriminates against councillors on account of their gender or other protected characteristics?
12. Does the council have a comprehensive anti-harassment policy and a mechanism to address complaints of harassment and discrimination?
13. Are incidents treated with due seriousness and addressed in appropriate and timely manner?
14. Does the council provide support to their councillors, particularly women councillors, to help them understand the legal protection available against online and offline abuse and harassment? Is the council working with its local police forces to ensure there are formal mechanisms to report and follow through on incidents of abuse and harassment?
15. Does the council promote the role and work of all councillors? To include working with the

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media and others to ensure the full diversity of local people serving as councillors, including women and those with caring responsibilities are heard, seen, promoted and celebrated as role models.

16. Does the council invest in and support a diversity of councillors, in particular women and those with caring responsibilities? For example, through quality induction, mentoring, buddying, women's networks, learning and development?
17. Does the council consciously reach out, cross-party, in collaboration with civil society organisations, particularly within the women's sector, to promote and engage women and those with caring responsibilities and encourage them to be a councillor?
18.

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Appendix 4: ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

COUNCIL:	
LEAD COUNCILLOR(S):	
LEAD OFFICER(S):	
RESPONSIBLE COMMITTEE / TASK GROUP:	
VERSION:	
(DRAFT/ FOR SIGN OFF/ FINAL)	
VERSION DATE:	
DATE OF REVIEW:	

PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Provide a summary of who has been engaged in the process of completing this toolkit? How have they been engaged?

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- Has a data set of quantitative and qualitative data been created? Is there an analysis of this data? If so, attach as appendix 1.
- Are there any other position papers, meeting minutes or outputs that provide background to the action plan? Attach as appendices and list here.

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ACTION PLAN

This action plan summarises the work of [add group/individual/committee] using the LGA toolkit [add title].

The Action Plan is divided by the following thematic sections:

- Understand your local picture
- Leadership and power
- Flexible and family-friendly workplace
- Culture and conduct
- Supporting women, parents and carers

Summary commitment and vision

What is the overall vision the council has developed and agreed, to create conditions that encourage and empower women, parents and carers to become local councillors and take on leadership positions?	How will the council know when this has been achieved?
What key quantitative and qualitative measures and milestones have been agreed to monitor progress?	
How will the council be monitoring and delivering accountability for progress against this action plan?	

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1. Understand your local picture

In summary, what is the current picture? What has your analysis and discussion of the data and the key questions told you about the engagement of women, parents and carers as councillors? And as leaders? (you may want to use bullet points)			
What are the strengths the council celebrates, can share as good practice and will build on?			
What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?			
What have you agreed will be different? What is the change(s) you are going to make to get there? What are the solutions you are proposing?			
How will you know when you have achieved the change?			
What actions are you prioritising to make this change happen?	What support or resources are needed?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done by?

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2. Leadership and power

In summary, what is the current picture? What has your analysis and discussion of the data and the key questions told you about the engagement of women, parents and carers as councillors? And as leaders? (you may want to use bullet points)			
What are the strengths the council celebrates, can share as good practice and will build on?			
What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?			
What have you agreed will be different? What is the change(s) you are going to make to get there? What are the solutions you are proposing?			
How will you know when you have achieved the change?			
What actions are you prioritising to make this change happen?	What support or resources are needed?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done by?

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3. Flexible and family-friendly workplace

In summary, what is the current picture? What has your analysis and discussion of the data and the key questions told you about the engagement of women, parents and carers as councillors? And as leaders? (you may want to use bullet points)			
What are the strengths the council celebrates, can share as good practice and will build on?			
What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?			
What have you agreed will be different? What is the change(s) you are going to make to get there? What are the solutions you are proposing?			
How will you know when you have achieved the change?			
What actions are you prioritising to make this change happen?	What support or resources are needed?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done by?

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4. Culture and conduct

In summary, what is the current picture? What has your analysis and discussion of the data and the key questions told you about the engagement of women, parents and carers as councillors? And as leaders? (you may want to use bullet points)			
What are the strengths the council celebrates, can share as good practice and will build on?			
What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?			
What have you agreed will be different? What is the change(s) you are going to make to get there? What are the solutions you are proposing?			
How will you know when you have achieved the change?			
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5. Supporting women, parents and carers

In summary, what is the current picture? What has your analysis and discussion of the data and the key questions told you about the engagement of women, parents and carers as councillors? And as leaders? (you may want to use bullet points)			
What are the strengths the council celebrates, can share as good practice and will build on?			
What or where have you identified that you could be doing better?			
What have you agreed will be different? What is the change(s) you are going to make to get there? What are the solutions you are proposing?			
How will you know when you have achieved the change?			
What actions are you prioritising to make this change happen?	What support or resources are needed?	Who is responsible?	When will this be done by?

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Further reflections

Are there any strengths or examples of good practice from your council you would like to share with the LGA and other councils?	
Are there any examples of good practice you have used from elsewhere?	
Are there any particular gaps in data or available resources and support you have experienced completing this toolkit (and would find it useful to inform the LGA about)?	
Is there any other learning from this process you would want to share locally or with the LGA?	

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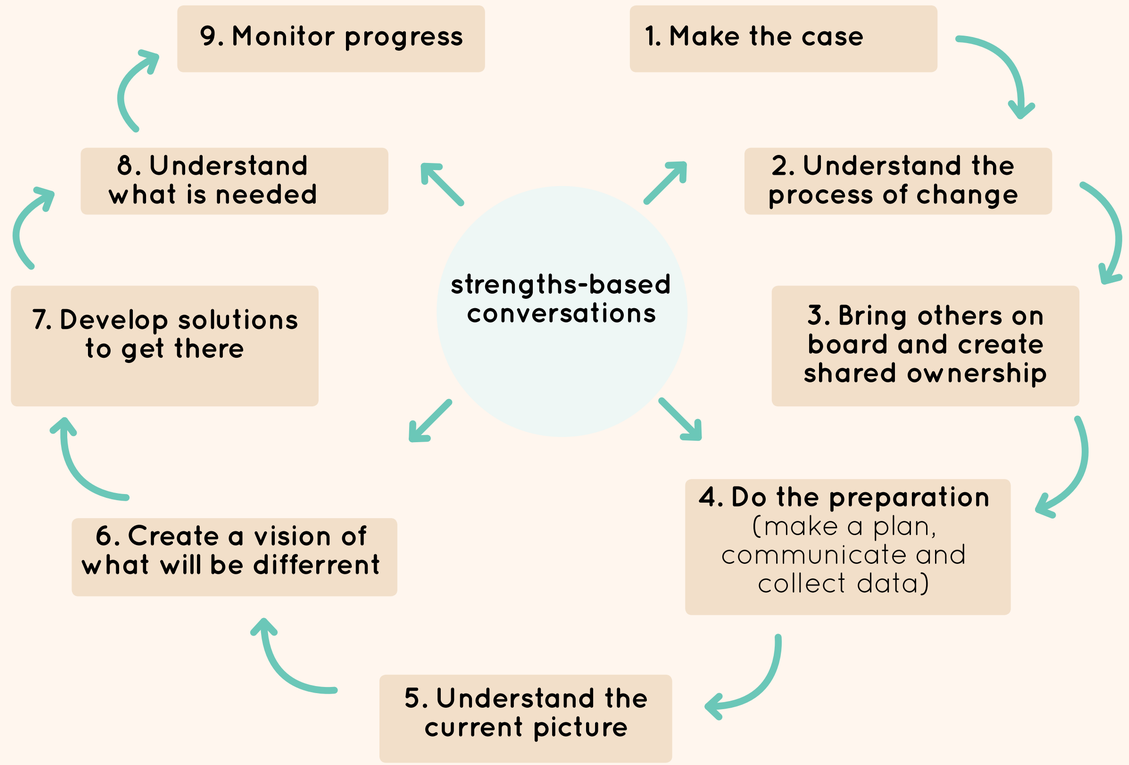

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Appendix 5: PREPARATION TEMPLATE

Step 1: Making the case for change

The Numbers	
How many women over the age of 18 live in the council area?	
What per cent of the local population have caring or parental responsibilities?	
How many candidates at the last council election were women? What per cent was this of all candidates?	
How many candidates had parental or caring responsibilities? What per cent was this of all candidates?	
How many women are currently serving as councillors? What per cent is this? Has this number increased, decreased or stayed constant in recent years?	
How many of the current councillors have parental or caring responsibilities? What per cent is this? Has this number increased, decreased or remained constant over recent years?	

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Locally: (this data may not be available to you to consider) How many of the serving councillors who are women, parents or carers are also disabled BME or LGBT+?	
What other data do you have on the 'protected characteristics' of councillors?	
How many cabinet members are women? Are either the leader or deputy leader(s) women?	
How many cabinet members have parental or caring responsibilities? Do either your leader or deputy leader(s) have parental or caring responsibilities?	

The key benefits of change in your council:

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Step 2: Understanding the process of change

Space for your notes on the change process as applied to your council:

Step 3: Bringing others on board and creating shared ownership

1.	Who will bring leadership and influence?	
2.	What resources do you need and who has capacity to support the process?	
3.	Who else cares about this agenda? Who has a stake or influence in the wider system to ensure broad engagement and adoption?	
4.	Who do you already know who you can easily contact and bring on board?	

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Step 4: Preparation (make a plan, communicate and collect data)

Scale of your programme or project. Proposed time frames:		
Collecting data and other sources:		
What quantitative data do you have on the representation of women, parents and carers? Can you disaggregate this data by other protected characteristics? Are you able to make comparisons with national data? Appendix 2 identifies a suggested core dataset to create for use in the conversations.		
What qualitative data is available on people's experiences and perceptions of the current picture and their experiences? Appendix 3 includes a short set of survey questions that could be used for gathering anonymous, qualitative date from councillors. This could form an important part of understanding experiences, perceptions and attitudes.		
Which policies and protocols that impact on women, parents and carers in their role as councillors would it be helpful to consider? There is a checklist at appendix 1.		

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How are you going to communicate the conversation to engage others? For example, consider:	
Which audiences are you communicating with and how will you reach and involve them?	
What voices are missing from the conversation? Are men around the table? Ensure dialogue is not just between women, parents and carers. Are there people speaking from experience across the range of protected characteristics?	
What are the key messages, and are they focused on the benefits of the change? Can you demonstrate these with real, local stories?	
Can you use film and events as well as written information to share these messages and stories?	
How could you build knowledge and awareness gradually? Are there specific events to communicate key messages? (there is a list of useful dates in Further Resources)	
At which points and how do you want to receive feedback, evidence or other input from stakeholders? Will you consult on any part of the process?	
Are any of your key stakeholders very active on social media? How can they champion your messages?	
Do you need any expertise or additional capacity to support communication?	
Can you interest the local media, i.e. both traditional and social media influencers?	
Do you need to think about how to respond positively to negative feedback or responses?	

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Do you want to set up a dedicated webpage, social media accounts or hashtags to support people to engage with the conversation as it progresses? And to publish the work in progress as it develops?	
How will you structure strengths-based conversations for change and action planning?	

Step 9: Monitoring and reviewing

How will the council monitor and review any change?

For example, consider whether to:

Publish the findings, so that their actions are accountable to their communities.

Report the findings to the relevant scrutiny or policy committee.

Build in regular (e.g. quarterly or six-monthly) progress reviews.

Let the LGA know you have completed the self-assessment and action planning, so that we can share your best practice, signpost you to other best practice or put you in touch with councils who have experience in the areas that you are working to improve.

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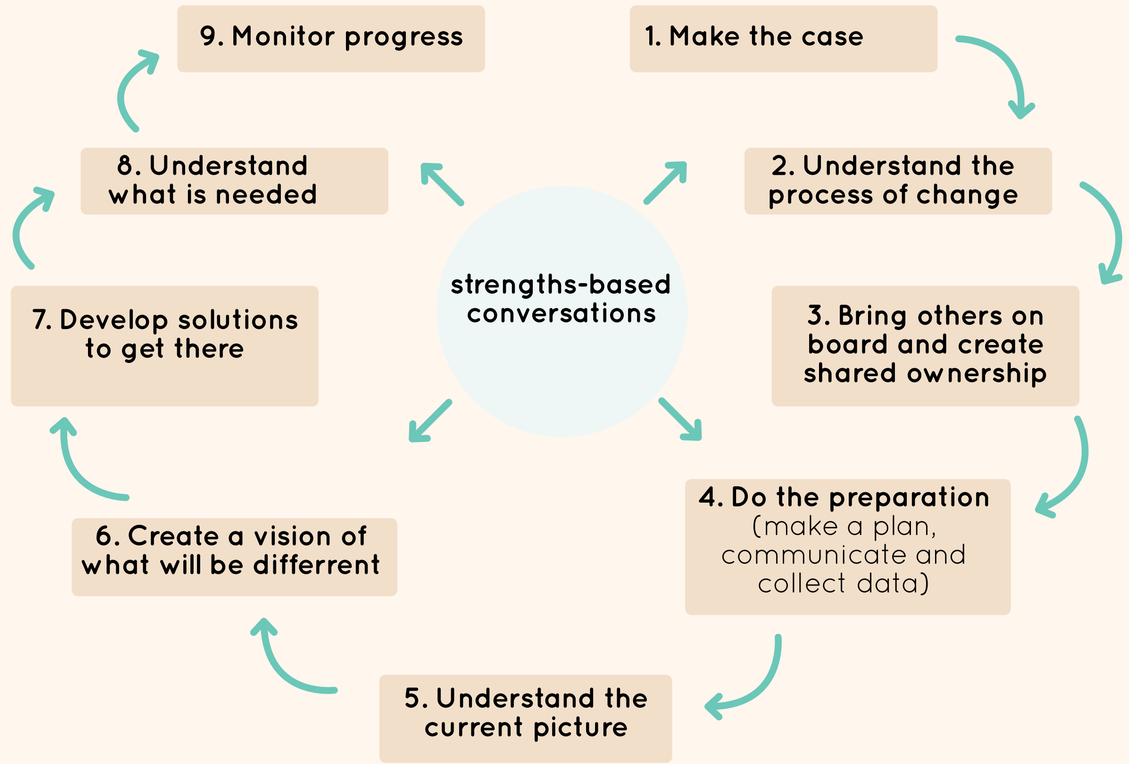

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