Written submission from Ms Jill Smyth (WHC0039)

Representation shapes policy. More women MPs would ensure more informed policy-making on all issues and particularly those concerning equal pay, reproductive rights, violence against women and girls, domestic violence, pensions, sexism, discrimination, inclusion, maternity care, family life, and parenting. All issues which, poorly handled, hold the country back. The issues of the increasing trend of sexual violence towards girls at school and young women at university, the low figures of conviction for sexual violence and the disgracefully low terms given out on sentencing all reflect a society that is largely governed by men for whom these issues are simply not part of their lives. Men do not understand sexual threat and vulnerability first-hand. They do not understand sexual harassment. They don’t experience being paid less because of their gender. They don’t experience being belittled and thought less of because of their gender. And yet they are the ones entrusted with making laws that govern the lives and daily experience of millions of women. We need a truly diverse body of MPs, reflecting the needs and aspirations of the country as a whole, not a group of mainly white, middle-aged men. For a better, fairer future for all and for a country that works for all (as the PM has outlined) we need many more female decision-makers. For a better country – look to your amazing women.

September 2016