

Modernisation Committee
Submission by Disability Politics UK
May 2025

1. Disability Politics UK is grateful for the Opportunity to Submit a Note to the Modernisation Committee following the Call for Evidence by the Leader of the Commons.

Introduction

2. Disability Politics UK is staffed by volunteers. It monitors news reports, including Disability News Service, observes relevant court cases, reads reports, and networks with disabled politicians and disabled people about access to elected office. It has a website: <https://www.disabilitypolitics.org.uk>, a Twitter account @dis_politics and a Facebook page. Volunteers have submitted Notes and Research on other topics. These include the need to ensure #GCSEMedicine is part of the Core National Curriculum. They have also submitted to the Greater London Assembly Environment Committee a Note on how to counteract Mould in Military Accommodation.

A new Government pledges Change

3. After the General Election in July 2024, Disability Politics U. K's landing page on its website was updated to state:

“Latest News

In July 2024, a new Government was elected.

The Modernisation of the House of Commons was promised in the Manifesto of the Labour Party. Disability Politics UK considers this should include enabling people to stand as Job Share Candidates for elected Political Office.

Flexible working for MPs and Councillors was raised in the Centenary Action Group's Report on overcoming the barriers to Disabled Women's involvement in Politics. See page 5 [here](#).

Disability Politics UK and the **Fawcett Society** sent a joint submission to the United Nations with recommendations as follows:

1. The UK should enact s106 of the Equality Act 2010 which would require the collation of statistics on diversity data at local government and Parliamentary level. This should be changed now.
2. The UK should amend electoral law to enable people to stand as job share candidates for the House of Commons. This should be changed before the next Parliamentary elections in the UK.
3. The UK should amend electoral law to enable people to stand as job share candidates for local government office. This should be changed before the next cycle of local elections in the UK.
4. The UK should re-instate the Access to Elected Office Fund. We hope the Government will reply to these recommendations later in the year.

The full submission can be seen - [here](#)

The Fawcett Society published a report supporting Job Sharing for MPs, please see - [here](#)”

Reason for Submitting our Evidence

4. The Modernisation Committee’s Call for Evidence lists 5 headings asking for views to be submitted. The Government was elected on a Manifesto called ‘Change.’ Disabled people are framed in the Media as being ‘workshy,’ ‘scroungers,’ ‘life unworthy of life.’ Yet any Disabled Person who wants to stand for elected Public office faces insurmountable Barriers if they want to work part time or job share. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in her speech to the House of Commons on Pathways to Work reform said:

“The status quo in unacceptable.”

Ms Kendall continued: “To end the sticking plaster approach...and tackle the root causes of problems in this country that have been ignored for too long. Because we all have something positive to contribute and make a difference.”

5. Disabled people and others who want to work as Job Share elected politicians have been trying for a long time to stand for Elected Office.
6. People have asked the Employment Tribunal and the High Court to decide that job sharing in elected public office is lawful. Lorraine Mann sought to persuade the Employment Tribunal in 1999 she was entitled to stand as a Job Share for the Scottish Parliament. Lorraine won and the case was appealed to the Employment Appeal Tribunal. The EAT decided:

“the Employment Tribunal did not have jurisdiction conferred upon it to determine a claim under the Sex Discrimination Act and any remedy lay in judicial review (or an Election Court in appropriate cases).” (EAT/56/00)

Quote from the Legal Opinion written by Karon Monaghan KC funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

7. Consequently, in 2015, two Green Party members, Sarah Cope and Clare Phipps applied to the Returning Officer for Basingstoke constituency to stand for election jointly. They wanted to stand on a job sharing basis. This was refused by the Returning Officer. After Crowdfunding, Ms Cope and Ms Phipps applied for Judicial Review of the decision.

Mr Justice Wilkie stated in his judgment that:

“It is not unduly non-interventionist for the court to say that it is not arguable that these issues are properly justiciable. They raise...a range of complex practical and conceptual questions which the court is not remotely equipped to deal with and, in my judgment...these are not proper issues for the court to debate and determine.”

Extract from Chapter 3 of the Fawcett Society Pamphlet referred to at point 4 of the Latest News on the Disability Politics UK's website referred to above.

8. The Modernisation Committee could therefore Recommend the Speaker undertake to establish a Committee to Review the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. This could include ensuring that the Orders enable job sharing in elected public office in future.
9. Wales has already instituted job sharing in elected Public Office at Local Government level.

Overseas Developments

10. In the recent Australian Federal elections, two Candidates sought to job share and this has been reported in Lawyers Weekly on May 14, 2025.

Plain English laws

11. One of our Volunteers, who worked as a Community Lawyer in a Publicly Funded Law Centre, contacted MPs about writing law in Plain Language. Having asked three MPs from the Conservative Party, the Labour Party, the Liberal Democrats, they were all willing to work on a Bill to ensure Parliament passed legislation people understand. This could result in a saving of Court time and less hostility towards Institutions related to Criminal and Civil Justice. A paper on this is available if the Modernisation Committee wish to look at it. This is also something within the competence of the Plain Language Commission, whose 15 Tips on Writing Plain English are available as a FREE download.

Please read:

12. Fawcett Society Pamphlet 'Open House? Reflections on the possibility of and practice of MPs job-sharing' (September 2017) funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, University of Bristol and Birkbeck University of London

ENDS

23 May 2025