

CCJS06 Professor Sarah Childs, The University of Edinburgh and Professor Rosie Campbell, King's College London.

Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament

Y Pwyllgor Busnes | Business Committee

Rhannu swydd cadeirydd pwyllgor | Committee chair job sharing

Ymateb gan yr Athro Sarah Childs, Prifysgol Caeredin a'r Athro Rosie Campbell, King's College London | Response from Professor Sarah Childs, The University of Edinburgh and Professor Rosie Campbell, King's College London.



Sarah Childs, PhD
Professor of Politics and Gender

SCHOOL of SOCIAL and POLITICAL SCIENCE
Politics and International Relations
The University of Edinburgh

Date: 17 sept 2024

RE: Committee Chair Job Sharing

As authors of the 2019 Fawcett Society Report [Open House](#) and job-sharing members (Gender Advisers) of the then National Assembly of Wales Expert Panel on Assembly Electoral Reform we wanted to respond, , to your call for evidence.

The proposal being considered, if we understand it correctly, is qualitatively different from our advocacy of job-share for MPs and other elected representatives. The latter was designed to provide the means by which those unable, perhaps because of caring responsibilities or disabilities, to work full-time as an elected representative, could as one half of a job share fulfil their right to stand for elected office on a part-time basis. In other words, it was designed to transform the composition of the chamber to make it more representative of society.

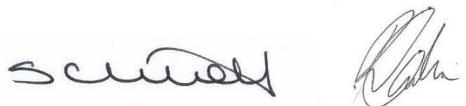
Job share for Committee Chairs is of a qualitatively different order. It is offering an elected member *already working full-time* to share the responsibility of chairing a committee. It may well be that job-sharing this additional work offers up the possibility of a parliamentary leadership position to those that might not otherwise be willing or able to undertake full-time chairing responsibilities over and above their 'normal' work as an MP. But it does not fundamentally change who may or may not put themselves forward for (s)election.

If the goal is to diversify leadership of committees this proposal may well deliver, *albeit amongst sitting Members* of the Welsh Parliament. The work load - in being shared - might become more feasible for those with caring or other responsibilities or situations that limit the 'extra' work they can undertake. For this reason, it is supportable. This would be particularly the case if the job-share were treated and operated in light of best practice of other job-shares in the private and public sector. If the primary concern is that the workload as a chair is currently too onerous an alternative might be to create Chairs and Deputies, and have a gender-balance and/or diversity rule to ensure that these opportunities bring about gender and diversity sensitive change.

All that said, there is a clear reputational risk of calling what is being suggested job-share, precisely because it only offers 'part-time' work in addition to one's full-time work as a Member of the Parliament. As currently designed, chair job-share misrepresents, could lead to expectations that cannot be fulfilled at this time; namely, job-sharing *as* elected representatives. Moreover, there is a substantive risk: attention may well be taken away from introducing measures that are necessary for some individuals to stand for political office. If the public or indeed parliamentarians regard 'job-share' as now in place, they may have little sympathy or support for its introduction for elected representatives.

Job-share is an important tool to bring about changes in the composition of organizations, parliaments included. We had high hopes that Wales would lead the way in considering the introduction of job-share for elected members, and accordingly consider this a missed opportunity. Whilst there is some value in allowing co-chairs to distribute the work between two members, this falls far short of the radical intervention that MP job-shares would constitute.

Yours truly

The image shows two handwritten signatures. The signature on the left is 'Sarah Childs' and the signature on the right is 'Rosie Campbell'.

Professor Sarah Childs and Professor Rosie Campbell