



Job Share in the Scottish Parliament Review Report

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01 ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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Lila is a Senior Lecturer in Organisation Studies at the University of Edinburgh Business School. Her research interests include the sociology of work and employment relations.

Starting with a UKRI/ESRC funded project on remote work during the pandemic in 2020 Lila has developed extensive expertise in the area of flexible work arrangements. She has led a range of studies on home-based work, hybrid work, the 4-day week and their relation to physical space, employee voice, productivity, and the quality of working life.

Her research is published in world leading journals such as Sociology, Business & Society, Industrial Relations Journal, Human Relations, Work, Employment and Society, and the Antipode as well as published and mentioned in practitioner and news outlets of wide circulation such as the HR Magazine, The Conversation, The Times and The Herald.

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Lynn is a leading expert on flexible working and workplace equality. Drawing on over two decades' experience of research, programme management, and international policy, enables her to translate evidence into practical, scalable solutions.

As founder of Flexible Working Scotland, Lynn has grown and leads Scotland's largest flexible-working community of 23.8k members, contributing to parliamentary inquiries, campaigns, and policy debates. As the co-Creator of an award-winning women returners programme, Making Work Work, she brings extensive experience designing, funding, and evaluating initiatives that deliver measurable outcomes for women and employers.

She works effectively alongside academic leads, bringing a practitioner perspective that grounds research in real-world relevance. Lynn gave evidence to the Scottish Parliament's Child Poverty Enquiry to argue for change to support greater parental employment and thereby help address child poverty, including accessible, affordable childcare, flexible working and support for women to re-enter the workplace after a break.



02 INTRODUCTION

The present report responds to a request from the Scottish Parliament Gender Sensitive Parliament Advisory Group to assist the Advisory Group's future consideration of job sharing.

While the aim of the report is to make recommendations based on the experiences of a range of other legislatures in this area, we found no evidence of a job sharing precedent in other legislatures around the world. It is, therefore, not possible to assess if job sharing has reduced barriers to political office based on existing evidence. Our recommendations, instead, draw on a review of the case for and against job sharing in elected office. For example, a relevant study focusing on citizen's intentions to stand for political office suggests that the job sharing option is more popular among women than men and very popular among disabled people (1). The study findings, thus, indicate that job sharing can widen political participation. Furthermore, job sharing in the public sector and the private sector is described in the relevant literature as more popular among underrepresented groups, which further indicates that job sharing in a political context may follow the same path, widening participation.

Similarly scarce is evidence on the lived working experiences of job share partners in elected positions in local government or parliaments. It is indicative that a recent consultation on the expansion of job share in elected office in Wales (42) received relatively limited responses, most of which were not grounded on lived job sharing experiences in executive roles (36).

Such lack of evidence on job sharing suggests there is a need for primary research, beyond a consultation or a literature review. If we are to achieve an in-depth understanding of job sharing in elected office, we would - alongside the implementation of job sharing in the Scottish Parliament - need fieldwork researchers to actively study the experiences of job share partners, document their experiences, and systematically analyse them.

02 INTRODUCTION

To prepare this report, we conducted a comprehensive search of relevant literature in academic and policy databases and search engines. We followed four key steps. First, we identified suitable key words to insert into databases and search engines. In particular, the key words we included were 'job share/sharing' in conjunction with local government and legislature-related words (parliament, council, cabinet, MP, representative, congress, counsel, minister*, legislat*, committe*, senat*, mayor*, govern*, chancel*, secretar*, execut*, officer, speaker, president*, civil serv*, executive service, premier, adviser, advisor, commiss*, administrat*, bureau* director*, directorat*, agenc*). Second, we inserted the key words into academic and policy databases including Overton, Policy Commons, CORE, Web of Science, and Scopus. Following that, we extended the search through the Google search engine where we inserted key words in French (mandat partagé, parlement, jobsharing député partagé) as well as through ChatGPT with a series of prompts, such as 'could you see if there is any evidence of job sharing - sharing a political office (e.g. constituency or regional representative) - sharing a party position (e.g. party leadership) - sharing an office (e.g. Co-chairing a committee or working group) in local government (city, region, town, commune, county, etc) in any country (include searches in the French, German, Dutch and English language)'. Third, we screened through the search outputs for relevant publications and fourth, we analysed the information in the selected publications and wrote up the report. The study was conducted between 29 December 2025 and 5 February 2026.

The findings of this report are presented in four sections. The first section offers a description of what job share in a political context would entail and examples of job share in the public sector. The second section presents an overview of milestones in job sharing initiatives for elected members and the third section systematically analyses benefits associated with job sharing in elected office. The fourth section identifies key conditions for successful job share among elected members and the conclusion suggests that there is a strong case for a job sharing provision e.g. via a pilot programme in Scotland for widening participation. The final section concludes the report.

Job sharing is a flexible working arrangement practiced since the 1970s in non-political contexts in the public, private and third sectors. It refers to part-time work where the contractual arrangements allow for two employees being jointly responsible and accountable for the workload of one position (2). It has been praised as high-quality part-time work, enabling career paths and ambitions on a part-time basis (3). Drawing on experiences of successful implementation elsewhere, job sharing has been proposed and passionately debated as an arrangement which could widen political participation if implemented in a political context (please see Table 1 which present a summary of job share initiatives in the public sector in the UK and beyond).



03 WHAT IS JOB SHARING IN THE POLITICAL CONTEXT?

In the absence of practice in elected positions, it is worthwhile to examine the partially analogous experience of the public sector (including employees, diplomats, appointees and elected officials). Table 1, below, offers examples of job sharing in public service from around the world. It includes examples or guidelines for, for example, civil servants, supreme court judges and diplomats serving their country overseas.

Table 1. Examples of Job Sharing in the public sector

<p>UK, Local government</p>	<p>According to Walton (2017), job sharing has been available for public sector workers in the UK since the 1970s and started being used during the 1980s primarily by women with children (4). In Scotland specifically, several local authorities mention job sharing in job vacancies or on recruitment web pages.</p> <p>Wales The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2019 and 2021 includes provisions for elected councillors to job-share executive roles (such as leader, cabinet member, and committee chair positions). Swansea Council introduced job-sharing in 2017 before legislation came into force and has since used it for various cabinet roles, all of which have been held by women (5).</p>
<p>UK, Local government</p>	<p>England</p> <p>There are provisions for job share arrangements at a local government level. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lambeth Council, where two councillors, Nanda Manley-Browne and David Bridson, served as joint Cabinet Members for Healthier and Stronger Communities • Brighton & Hove Council, where two Green party councillors served as Joint Deputy Leaders of the Council and two Labour party councillors served as co-Leaders of the Official Opposition - Bath and Bristol Councils within Cabinet roles. • Wandsworth Council, where Fleur Anderson and Candida Jones served as joint Deputy Leaders of the Labour Group (5).

03 WHAT IS JOB SHARING IN THE POLITICAL CONTEXT?

Table 1. Examples of Job Sharing in the public sector (cont.)

<p>UK, Supreme Court</p>	<p>According to Curling (2017, p.20) (6), the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, amended by the Crime and Courts Act 2013, effectively provides for job sharing between Supreme Court judges. Part-time justices of the Supreme Court can be appointed up to a ‘full-time equivalent’. In November 2014, the Judicial Appointments Commission advertised positions for High Court judges with the option for ‘either 50/50 or 60/40 job share’ (6).</p>
<p>UK, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office;</p> <p>Government Communications Headquarters; MI5</p>	<p>The UK Foreign and Commonwealth office, now Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, has reportedly a track record of flexible work arrangements including job sharing positions. Spanning over two decades, it has been reported that the vast majority of staff have flexible working arrangements in place including job sharing (7).</p> <p>The Guardian reports on a shared leadership role in the intelligence mission at GCHQ (46) and the MI5 careers page advertises job sharing as a business enabler (47).</p>

03 WHAT IS JOB SHARING IN THE POLITICAL CONTEXT?

Table 1. Examples of Job Sharing in the public sector (cont.)

<p>Germany, Berlin</p>	<p>The CDU and SPD submitted a motion on "Leadership in part-time: Establishing job-sharing models in the public service of the state of Berlin" which was debated in the Berlin State Parliament (8). Besides that, the District election programme 2023 by the German Green Party outlines how flexible working, including job sharing is widespread among the public sector members of staff in Berlin. The German Greens wished to extend it to leadership roles (8).</p>
<p>Czechia, Prague</p>	<p>Following an employee’s maternity leave, job sharing was considered by the local authority Town District Prague 9 in Czechia. Offering job sharing aimed at employee retainment and promoting flexible work, work life balance, job satisfaction, as well as role modelling for other services and business (15).</p>
<p>Australia</p>	<p>The House of Representatives Australia has published an ‘Employee Collective’, which provides for job sharing for two or more staff sharing duties of a single post (9). Furthermore, the NSW public service commission published in 2019 a “Job Share Guide for Employees” (10).</p>
<p>USA</p>	<p>Job-sharing arrangements for Federal employees in the USA were authorized in the 1978. In 1990, the Congress Office of Personnel Management launched a pilot programme facilitating job sharing in four cities (11). Two employees successfully job shared at the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Human Trafficking for seven years (13).</p>
<p>United Nations</p>	<p>Job sharing exists among officials in various UN bodies (14).</p>

Looking specifically at the civil service and the wider public sector, job sharing is a part-time work arrangement where two or more staff share duties and are jointly accountable for their work (9). Job share partners also share the position’s benefits, compensation (16), and leave entitlement, which are all allocated on a pro-rata basis (17). As the New South Wales government highlights, “from the organisation’s perspective, job share is a full-time role completed by two or more employees” (10).

03 WHAT IS JOB SHARING IN THE POLITICAL CONTEXT?

Turning to elected positions in public service, although elected individuals may have shared a role in England and Wales (e.g. jointly leading a party or fulfilling a Cabinet role), job share in an electoral context would take this further. Job sharing in electoral politics is described as an arrangement under which two or more individuals jointly stand for election on the basis that if elected, they will represent the electorate as a single elected official (18). This involves sharing the workload, compensation and expenses of an elected official equally (19).

So far, however, job sharing has not been implemented in the electoral context (18, 20, 21, 22). Our own research through academic, policy documents and other databases and search engines in the English language did not generate any examples of job sharing in elected office. Neither did searches in the French language and prompts for results in the German and Dutch languages identify job-sharing of parliamentary mandates in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands or Switzerland. In some of these countries, splitting an elected seat between two people is prohibited (23), and whilst some may allow people to hold multiple elected roles (in French: *cumul des mandats*, in German: *Doppelmandat*), this does not include job-sharing (24). In Belgium and the Netherlands work delegation practices exist, in particular to political personal assistants (who could be seen as performing some of the functions of a politician), but are not true job-shares (25). In Belgium, for example, disabled elected officials have allowances for ‘confidential advisors’, who assist officials with their duties, including the discussion of policies (25). This assistance is, however, only advisory in nature. Similarly, there seem to be no examples of job sharing in Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland or Iceland). Wales seems to be a pioneer in exploring job sharing, as executive job sharing is currently being expanded in elected office at a local government level and job sharing is being explored at the parliamentary level.

There is a wide consensus within the reviewed literature over the single person principle, where job sharers would share all aspects of work responsibility, compensation and accountability. The majority of sources also highlight that work is to be shared as opposed to be divided, yet, we noted some limited variation in how work is to be distributed among partners. In the political context, it is broadly agreed that work would be shared on a time-basis, yet, some scholars suggest that specific work tasks could also be potentially divided, with a key example being that of job sharing members of parliament, where one is more present in the parliament and the other closer to constituents through, for example, responsibility for surgery time (25, 26). Nevertheless, overall, job share is primarily discussed as on-a-rota or time-based work share. Its quintessence lays in enabling “jobs which cannot be carried out on a part-time basis to be accessible on a reduced hours basis” (27).

04 MILESTONES IN JOB SHARING INITIATIVES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

This section includes a timeline of milestones in job sharing initiatives in politics which was put together by collating information from a range of sources (12, 18, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 43, 44, 45).

Table 2. Milestones in Job Sharing initiatives for Elected Members

<p>1999, Scotland</p>	<p>Lorraine Mann and Eddie Stiven (Highlands and Islands Alliance) jointly stood for election in the Scottish Parliament but were not elected. The returning officer accepted their application explaining that in the event of being elected only the first candidate’s name would have been announced. Lorraine Mann took the case to an employment tribunal and was successful but the tribunal was followed by an Employment Appeal Tribunal which ruled that it did not have the jurisdiction to rule on the decision of an Electoral Returning Officer.</p>
<p>2010, UK Green Party conference</p>	<p>Caroline Lucas, co-leader of the Green Party for England and Wales presented the case for job-sharing MPs to the Green Party conference in Birmingham.</p>
<p>2012, UK, House of Commons</p>	<p>John McDonnell, a Labour MP, introduced the Representation of the People (Members’ Job Share) Bill 2012 in the House of Commons which aimed to enable representation of a constituency by two people sharing a seat in the House of Commons. The Parliament session finished before the Bill had an opportunity to pass.</p>

04 MILESTONES IN JOB SHARING INITIATIVES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Table 2. Milestones in Job Sharing initiatives for Elected Members

<p>2014, UK, Liberal Democrats’ Spring Conference</p>	<p>Job sharing for elected members was included in a policy paper presented to the Liberal Democrats’ Spring Conference in 2014 as a measure to improve diversity in Parliament.</p>
<p>2014, UK, Northern Ireland</p>	<p>Discussion on the adoption of job sharing for Members of the Legislative Assembly at evidence sessions which took place on the 16 September and 7 October 2014 in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Job sharing was discussed as a family-friendly mechanism for encouraging the participation of women in the Assembly.</p> <p>Two briefing papers were published that year as part of the review by Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive Review Committee to encourage more participation of women in politics and share examples of job sharing for political representatives.</p>
<p>2015, UK</p>	<p>Sarah Cope and Clare Phipps; Rachel Ling and Emma Rose; as well as Adam Lotun and Zion Zakari submitted three joint nomination applications for the constituencies of Basingstoke; Weston-Super-Mare and Hackney North & Stoke Newington respectively. In all three cases, the returning officers rejected their applications. Sarah Cope and Clare Phipps applied for Judicial Review of the decision of the Returning officer. Mr Justice Wilkie at the High Court in London ruled that it was not within the court’s jurisdiction to make a judgement.</p>
<p>2018, Switzerland</p>	<p>Irène Kälin, a federal parliamentarian in the lower house of Switzerland’s bicameral Federal Assembly, submitted a series of questions relating to job sharing in administration, courts and parliament. The major obstacle to job sharing seems to be the electoral law, which needs to be amended to allow for a higher number of Federal Council (Cabinet) members. Kälin’s questions did not lead to a debate and remain unaddressed by the Cabinet. A similar matter was raised by Kälin’s Greens colleague, Trede Aline, later in the same year and was similarly not addressed.</p>

04 MILESTONES IN JOB SHARING INITIATIVES FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

Table 2. Milestones in Job Sharing initiatives for Elected Members

2024, Australia	Lucy Bradlow and Bronwen Bock campaigned for job-sharing as elected members of the federal parliament since 2024. They could not jointly stand for election in 2025 and have taken their case to the Federal Court.
2024, UK, Wales	The Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill, which was voted on May 2024, required that a motion is tabled for a committee to review the possibility of job-sharing of offices in the Senedd. Stage 1 report of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill suggests that due consideration should be given to the feasibility and legislative challenges that job sharing in elections involves.
2025, UK, Wales	Following a Welsh Government consultation on job sharing in non-executive roles, Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government, published a written Statement announcing the extension of job-share provisions for elected members of principal councils to non-executive roles.



05 BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH JOB SHARING IN ELECTED OFFICE

There are three main arguments when making a case for job sharing in elected office. The first one relates to widening political participation among underrepresented groups; the second one focuses on the enhancement of political decision making through greater diversity in perspectives; and the third relates to practical benefits for constituents.

Widening political recruitment and participation. The electoral job sharing initiatives highlighted in the UK and beyond were proposed by potential election candidates from under-represented groups who saw job sharing as a way to manage caring responsibilities, a disability or a health condition alongside their aspirations to participate in politics. It is therefore, no surprise that the Scottish Parliament is examining the case for job sharing as a measure to enhance gender political representation. Campbell and Cowley (2014, p. 444) suggest that job sharing will boost the “supply of candidates with caring responsibilities or disabilities”, which does not necessarily equate only to women as it would also allow men take on caring responsibilities and participate in politics (35). It is anticipated, therefore, that job share would be a tool for improving gender representation beyond only women to people with caring responsibilities, disabled people, people with health and wellbeing problems, including chronic health issues, as well as those who do not wish or find it viable to take a long career break (1, 18, 28, 36, 37).

Research conducted by Awan-Scully et al (2018, p.73) provides evidence supporting the potential of job sharing to widen participation. In particular, their survey findings show that more women (68%) than men (56%) reported more likely to stand for election given a job sharing option and a large majority of those who identified as disabled (68%) also reported more likely to stand for office (1).

Wider participation could be encouraged by job sharing in different ways and for different reasons. Job sharing can help accommodate a balance between caring responsibilities, work and other pursuits and therefore break down barriers and remove obstacles relating to time deprivation.

05 BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH JOB SHARING IN ELECTED OFFICE

Joint campaigning can also partly alleviate individual campaigning costs and time constraints making it possible for candidates with more modest means or limited time to jointly communicate with the electorate ahead of elections. Candidates may also be encouraged by the mentoring opportunities and skills development that job sharing offers especially when sharing a campaign and office with a partner who is more experienced in politics. By association, discussing and deliberating all work components with a job share partner broadens the understanding of issues at stake and offers confidence in well-rounded decisions (1, 37), especially for newcomers in politics or when job sharers have expertise in different areas. Job sharing may also alleviate the pressures elected officials face, especially when they travel and spend a part of the week away from their families to enable proximity to their respective Parliament or Assembly, encouraging more citizens to stand for office (38). This is particularly important at a time when improvements in wider participation have either stagnated or deteriorated (39).

Greater diversity and inclusion of perspectives and solutions can enhance policy making.

The enhanced political participation of underrepresented groups would promote a wider diversity of perspectives, enable the voices of underrepresented groups to be heard and will make visible the problems faced by minorities as well as facilitating more inclusive solutions (36). In other words, widening participation is not just an end in itself, it is primarily a means to make more voices heard and the problems of all societal groups more visible, therefore making political decision-making more rounded and inclusive of the breadth of the society the parliament represents.

Other benefits to the electorate and political process. Job sharing advocates highlight a third benefit associated with the practice. It is suggested that the job share partners can cover each other's absence due to illness, external commitments or unforeseen circumstances enhancing continuity and consistency (36). By extension, Rose (2015) suggests that job sharing can increase the voting rate for MPs, which is generally around 65% (28). Furthermore, job sharing could prevent overwork and burn out (28), whilst it could also increase time for public surgeries and informal engagement with constituents, making it possible to have contact to constituents, even when one partner is away from their constituency. Walton (2017) also suggests that job sharing engenders a sense of responsibility towards the job share partner and so they are, thus, more likely to be productive (4). Finally, compared to other measures promoting political recruitment among underrepresented groups such as those with disabilities, job sharing is cost effective. For example, solutions such as support for daily life requirements including a personal assistant service provided to disabled people participating in some parliaments are more costly measures (25).



06 CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL JOB SHARE AMONG ELECTED MEMBERS

Recommendations for successful job sharing cannot be drawn on past experience given that job sharing in elected office has never been put to the test. Thus, we take the opportunity to present proposals on how to address concerns and practical matters arising from the introduction of job sharing as identified in the relevant literature. Here we group these into five key categories. These are summarised in Table 3, below.

1. Electoral Law, the single legal entity /one-vote principle and job-share expenses. It has been acknowledged that the electoral law must be amended to allow for job-sharing (20, 38). This became clear after two failed attempts by partner candidates in the UK and Scotland to stand for office as mentioned earlier and the lack of clarity on the jurisdiction over such decisions. Watt (2017, p.27) succinctly notes that electoral law is not fixed and unchanging in the UK but amendments are possible and have been the outcome of political argument over the centuries (31). Since the Scotland Act (1998), responsibility for electoral law is divided in that it is reserved to Westminster with respect to UK elections, but is devolved to the Scottish Parliament for Scottish Parliament and local elections.

A key principle in amending the relevant legislation is the one-vote principle which clarifies that job-share partners are to be treated as one person (40) or a single legal entity (41). The one-person principle relates to responsibilities such as voting as well as elected office expenses (41) but probably not all allowances. Potter and McCaffrey (2014) note that in the case of the Scottish Parliament where voting is electronic, no concerns over vote duplication can practically arise (18). Furthermore, where a quorum is required or the job-sharers vote is the casting vote, the one-vote principle should apply with the job-sharers vote counting as one vote (42).

It is widely accepted that job-sharing can only be supported under the condition of no additional expenses for the taxpayer. Job-share advocates and sceptics alike agree on that in principle, with the first often discussing how and why this is achievable (5, 28, 38) and the latter casting their doubt. Rose (2015), for example, suggests that job-share partners would share office and staff expenses and whilst travel expenses may be higher this is not necessarily so (28).

06 CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL JOB SHARE AMONG ELECTED MEMBERS

If the work arrangement is one where one partner spends more time close to the parliament and the other in the constituency, travel expenses may be reduced. It has been suggested that allowances for home broadband and residential support or the cost of jointly employing staff through a partnership cannot fall under the one-person rule and, by association, will increase expenses. However, in the case of Wales, these expenses are described as minimal and, therefore, the divergence from the one-person principle is seen as acceptable (5).

2. Early termination. A widely discussed matter is what should follow the early termination of office due to one of job sharers' resignation, suspension, death, or defecting to another party. It has been suggested that if one job-sharer resigns, the other member will have to be automatically deemed as having resigned too (40), with suspension and death or change of party all being treated in similar terms (i.e. the remaining job-sharer losing their elected office unless they also defect to the same party). The elected office post can be filled through countback, an appointment from the list or a by-election (41). It is notable that the most common view on addressing an early termination is through a by-election. The reasoning is that electors voted for a partnership and not an individual (28). It has also been suggested that by-elections are the only option that allows the remaining job-share partner to contest their office (41) in case of resignation, suspension or death, whereas defecting to another party would require both job-share partners to do so or alternatively for both to lose their seat.

3. Work arrangements, transparency and accountability. It is often suggested that both the electorate and fellow elected members of the council/ parliament deserve to be informed of the job-share work arrangements (18). Transparency and clarity would be required prior to the elections on matters such as the reasons for the job share as well as how work would be shared or divided. For example, there would need to be clarity on time arrangements (for example, would job-sharers be working half weeks, alternate/different weeks or months?) and, if relevant, task arrangements (would job-sharers divide tasks or would they both undertake all tasks including meetings, participation in debates and committees, voting, representation in the parliament and constituency work?). Potter and McCaffrey (2014) also suggest that job-share partners would be subject to the party whip (18), similar to other elected officials (5, 42).

06 CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL JOB SHARE AMONG ELECTED MEMBERS

An additional consideration in terms of work arrangements includes workload challenges such as risk of increased workload pressure from political parties to elected job-sharers (5), increased workload due to handover planning, communication, and meetings or duplication of work. Reflection on such challenges prior to elections is also recommended.

Overall, reflection on, and early communication of, work arrangements is seen as essential for review and accountability purposes. It is, however, widely maintained that work arrangements are best agreed by the job-sharers to suit their personal circumstances.

4. Disagreement between job-share partners. A widely discussed topic in the literature is the potential for disagreement among the job-share partners, including on matters they are called to vote on, given that job sharing assumes that partners share one vote between them. Recommendations relate to resolving the disagreement between job-sharers as well as guidance on how to officially respond to failure to reach agreement after negotiation. Firstly, disagreement on political matters can be addressed between job-share partners through discussion (28), negotiation, abstaining from the vote whilst recording of the different positions, the designation of a party adviser/mediator, or party whipping (5, 18). In the event of no resolution to voting disagreement, abstaining could be forced, effectively meaning that the vote of the job sharers will not count (42). Furthermore, on some occasions, such as chairing a committee, job-sharers may bear the responsibility of a casting vote. In the event of disagreement on a casting vote, it has been suggested that a vice-chair should bear the responsibility of the casting vote. In the absence of a vice-chair, the chairs should vote against the proposal (42).

5. Effectiveness and fairness. Finally, there is some indication that members of over-represented groups will make use of the opportunity to job-share, casting some doubt on the effectiveness of job share in widening political participation and representation. Research by Awan-Scully et al (2018, p.74), for example, indicates that doctors, solicitors and business people are among citizens interested in job-sharing as a viable way to participate in politics without fully disrupting their professional work or business activity (1). Walton (2017, p.3) suggests that similar concerns were shared in the 1970s and 1980s when job-sharing was introduced in non-political contexts (4). Yet, they did not come to materialise, with job-sharing becoming more popular among workers with caring responsibilities, health issues or disabilities and part-time workers moving toward retirement. It is, however, a space to follow closely upon through the evaluation of statistical evidence on the use of job-share. Finally, a potentially minor concern relates to informal contact with constituents which is likely to be higher for job-sharing partners as opposed to single members (18). Whilst this is a positive development for constituents, it has been argued that puts into disadvantage single members, especially if the single-member per constituency rule is considered (18).

06 CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL JOB SHARE AMONG ELECTED MEMBERS

Table 3. Summary table: Addressing practical matters arising from job-share

<p>1. Amend electoral law to include provision for job sharing in the Scottish Parliament, and specify what job sharing pertains to not least in relation to voting, allowances and expenses.</p>
<p>2. Clarify what follows an early termination of office due to one of job share partners'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Resignationii. Suspensioniii. Deathiv. Defecting to another party
<p>3. Develop guidance to ensure clarity on job share work arrangements prior to elections from joint candidates to enable transparency and accountability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. How is work going to be shared (on a half-week basis, weekly, monthly or alternative arrangements)ii. Will all or some work tasks be shared or split?iii. Will there be a requirement for transparency on job-sharing arrangements before the elections? Will there be a requirement for transparency on arrangements after the elections informing the electorate as well as other elected members in the parliament/ council?
<p>4. Develop guidance covering ways to resolve disagreement among job-share partners</p>
<p>5. Set up politically neutral mechanisms to monitor effectiveness and fairness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. There is some indication that members of over-represented groups may make use of the opportunity to job-shareii. Being two (or more) instead of one, job-sharers increase the opportunities for access among constituents or citizens. Whilst increased presence is positive for constituents, it may disadvantage non-job-sharing elected officials. Nonetheless, on-duty surgery time would be the same with a single elected office, doubling opportunities for contact only through informal contact.



07 CONCLUSION

The findings of this report suggest that there is a strong case for a job sharing provision in electoral law, as a means to support widening political participation in Scotland. Given the absence of practice and related literature, our secondary data analysis suggests that as diversity and inclusion successes have stagnated, new practices such as job sharing present an opportunity to restart progress toward a Gender Sensitive Parliament. Job sharing has the potential to support not only a more gender equitable Parliament, but one which supports those facing an intersectionality of barriers to participation.

The most passionate advocates of job sharing in elected office both in the UK and internationally have been people with caring responsibilities and disabilities, who reflect both on their capabilities and practical limitations in relation to their aspiration to participate in politics. The case for job sharing seems to be largely a grassroots movement from within politically under-represented groups with compelling arguments and worthy to put to test.

The job sharing of specific roles, such as committee co-convenor (as opposed to the current structure of one convener and one deputy convener), or committee member may enable some limited experimentation with job sharing as a concept, and would bring the Scottish Parliament into line with practice in other parts of the UK (including in local government). However, it may not significantly improve participation at a parliamentary level, as it is unlikely shift burdens of time, representation and responsibility significantly enough to make parliamentary office attractive to members of currently under-represented groups.

The first step in the direction of job sharing in a constituency representative context would be reviewing the electoral law so that joint candidates' applications are not rejected, e.g. by returning officers. A simple framework encouraging transparency and accountability as well as guidance in relation to voting, pay (where relevant), expenses and allowances would also be useful. There may be a role for the Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments Committee (48) in assessing the requirements in relation to the Parliament's Standing Orders. A pilot of job sharing in the Scottish Parliament – potentially with a research aspect – could allow stakeholders to test, learn, study and adapt the concept.



07 CONCLUSION

There is no indication that job sharing will spread rapidly or widely. It is not an easy decision to take or commitment to make. Job share testimonies from the public sector emphasise that a strong bond between partners based on common values, complementary schedules and good communication are central in successful shares, which may last for years (7, 13, 46). Genuinely strong relationships based on evaluative alignment on political matters are not easy to come by. When they form, however, strong relationships could make political engagement a real possibility for those with the opportunity to job share.

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Examples of Job Sharing in Public Life



An opportunity for the Scottish Parliament to be a trailblazer for inclusion and progress.



Highlands & Islands

Lorraine Mann and Eddie Stiven (Highlands and Islands Alliance) jointly stood for election in the Scottish Parliament but were not elected. The returning officer accepted their application explaining that in the event of being elected only the first candidate's name would have been announced.



Lambeth Council

Two councillors served as joint Cabinet Members for Healthier and Stronger Communities



Brighton & Hove Council

Two Green party councillors served as Joint Deputy Leaders of the Council and two Labour party councillors served as co-Leaders of the Official Opposition



Bath & Bristol Councils

Within Cabinet roles



Swansea Council

Swansea Council introduced job-sharing in 2017 before legislation came into force and has since used it for various cabinet roles, all of which have been held by women.



The Senedd Cymru

The Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill, which was voted on May 2024, required that a motion is tabled for a committee to review the possibility of job-sharing of offices in the Senedd. Stage 1 report of the Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill suggests that due consideration should be given to the feasibility and legislative challenges that job sharing in elections involves.

The UK's Journey Toward Job Sharing

1999, Scotland

Lorraine Mann and Eddie Stiven stood together for the Scottish Parliament but were not elected; their application was accepted, with only the first name to be announced if successful.

2010, UK Green Party conference

Caroline Lucas, co-leader of the Green Party for England and Wales presented the case for job-sharing MPs to the Green Party conference in Birmingham.

2012, UK, House of Commons

John McDonnell, a Labour MP, introduced the Representation of the People (Members' Job Share) Bill 2012 in the House of Commons which aimed to enable representation of a constituency by two people sharing a seat in the House of Commons. The Parliament session finished before the Bill had an opportunity to pass.

2014, UK, Liberal Democrats' Spring Conference

Job sharing for elected members was included in a policy paper presented to the Liberal Democrats' Spring Conference in 2014 as a measure to improve diversity in Parliament.

2015, UK

Applications for joint candidacy in Basingstoke, Weston-Super-Mare and Hackney North & Stoke Newington were refused, and a Judicial Review of the decision was requested, but the High Court in London ruled that it was not within the court's jurisdiction to make a judgement.

2014, UK, Northern Ireland

Job Sharing for Members of the Legislative Assembly was examined as a way to support women's participation. Two briefing papers were released to encourage more women in politics and showcase job-sharing examples.

2024, UK, Wales

The Senedd Cymru (Members and Elections) Bill, which was voted on May 2024, required that a motion is tabled for a committee to review the possibility of job-sharing of offices in the Senedd. [Stage 1 report](#) of the Senedd Cymru Bill suggests that due consideration should be given to the feasibility and legislative challenges that job sharing in elections involves.

2025, UK, Wales

Following a Welsh Government consultation on job sharing in non-executive roles, Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government, published a written Statement announcing the extension of job-share provisions for elected members of principal councils to non-executive roles.

Steps to Address Practical Matters Arising from Job Share

1

Amend electoral law to include provision for job sharing in the Scottish Parliament

2

Clarify what follows an early termination of office due to one of job share partners

3

Develop guidance to ensure clarity on job share work arrangements prior to elections from joint candidates to enable transparency and accountability

4

Develop guidance covering ways to resolve disagreement among job-share partners

5

Set up politically neutral mechanisms to monitor effectiveness and fairness