**Shadow Report submission by Disability Politics UK**

**Article 29 – Participation in political and public life**

1. Disabled people are seriously under-represented in the UK House of Commons, the only elected body in the Houses of Parliament.
2. According to a research publication published on the **Government Equalities** website:

“Disabled people, who make up around 1 in 5 of the UK population, are thought to be under-represented in politics at different levels of government, both across the UK and internationally.” Please see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/barriers-to-elected-office-for-disabled-people/barriers-to-elected-office-for-disabled-people#conclusions>

1. The **House of Commons Information Service** stated in an email dated 23 November 2021 sent to Deborah King, co-founder of Disability Politics UK:

“We do not hold statistics on disabled Members of Parliament as they do not have to specify that they have a disability (i.e. it is down to the MPs themselves, rather than it being a mandatory requirement). However, according to a House of Commons Library briefing paper produced after the 2019 General Election, "the number of disabled MPs elected in 2019, according to Disability Rights UK and The Guardian, was 5. This figure remains unchanged from 2017."  
  
According to the online Disability News Service, the five MPs are Labour's Marsha de Cordova, Emma Lewell-Buck and Marie Rimmer, and Conservatives Robert Halfon and Paul Maynard - "although it may emerge that some of the many new MPs also self-describe as disabled people."

1. This shows a clear breach of Article 31 of CRPD which states: “States Parties undertake to collect appropriate information, including statistical and research data, to enable them to formulate and implement policies to give effect to the present Convention.”
2. The fact the House of Commons does not collect and publish data on the disability of MPs undermines Article 29 of the CRPD.
3. **Job sharing in elected paid political office**

**Changing the law to permit job sharing in the House of Commons would enable more disabled people to stand for paid elected office.**

The Fawcett Society published a pamphlet in September 2017, **‘Open House? Reflections on the possibility and practice of MPs job-sharing’** which examined the election rules, the case for and against MP job sharing, the Frequently Asked Questions about how MP job sharing could work and the UK High Court position on a legal attempt to change the law to allow MPs to job share.

This research was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council. We urge the Committee to read this pamphlet.

1. On 25th March 2021, the Rt Hon Chloe Smith, then Minister of State for the Constitution and Devolution, wrote to Boris Johnson MP, Deborah King’s local MP and stated, inter alia:

“Dear Prime Minister

Thank you for your email of 22 February on behalf of your constituent, Ms Deborah King regarding job sharing for Members of Parliament and for attaching the Fawcett Society’s 2017 pamphlet, *Open House? Reflections on the possibility and practice of MPs job sharing.*

As you are no doubt aware, electoral law does not allow two or more candidates to stand jointly for one constituency seat at a UK Parliamentary election. Section 1(1) of the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 specifically refers to each constituency ‘returning a single member’. Each Member of Parliament is elected as an individual to represent their constituents and, by virtue of having been elected, is provided with the responsibility to participate in debates and vote in the House of Commons on behalf of their constituents. It is the Government’s view that it would be difficult for two individuals to act with one voice in a way that is consistent with the current duties of an MP and procedures of the House, and we have no current plans to bring forward legislation in this area.”

1. In Wales, the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, has been passed, which:

“Enable **job sharing** in the council Executive/Cabinet, including the post of Leader.”

Source, please see: <https://gov.wales/new-law-make-it-easier-more-people-wales-stand-be-local-councillors>

1. It is submitted that it is a breach of the CRPD to fail to change UK electoral law to enable MPs to job share. Changing the law would enable more disabled people, more parents, and more carers to stand for paid elected office.
2. We urge the Committee to recommend to the UK government that the law should be changed to enable job sharing for paid elected office posts.

Deborah King

Disability Politics UK

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