**Background**

Motion 1 at national women’s conference 2010 required an explanation of how job sharing works in UNISON’s senior structures, and information on the benefits and advantages of job sharing in UNISON.

The NEC issued guidance on job sharing which applies to all indirectly elected national committees including the national self organised groups. The national women’s committee is therefore required to work within this guidance, the full text of which is set out as Appendix A.

**The benefits of Job-sharing**

UNISON is supportive of job-sharing both in the workplace and for UNISON stewards and representatives. The benefits can include :

* a greater breadth of experience, knowledge and skills may be brought to the post;
* an individual may be more willing to accept shared responsibility a role if their work or personal commitments mean that they are unable or unwilling to take on the duties alone;
* job-sharers can learn from each other’s strengths;
* a level of cover can continue to be provided during periods of annual leave or sickness;
* job sharing may facilitate mentoring or phasing out – for example when an representative / branch officer wishes to retire in the near future;
* As job-sharing eases the strain of balancing union, work and personal responsibilities, job share partners can devote greater energy and focus when undertaking each role;
* With two people, there can be a built-in checking system, maintaining effectiveness and preventing errors.

**The practicalities**

When considering a job share arrangement, it is important to consider how this will work.

* job-share need not be an equal hours relationship – it may be a skill-share arrangement, provided the job-sharers are clear about that relationship and are equally committed to its success;
* As job sharers carry joint responsibility for the post, it is useful to have a period of overlap between the two job sharers for them to exchange information and plan work – this is particularly important to ensure that assumptions are not made about which job share partner is undertaking a particular piece of work, and important deadlines and/or opportunities are not missed;
* the NEC’s national guidance is very clear that job share is sharing a role, and not two people participating as individuals side by side. Therefore the costs, duties and attendance rights are also shared between the partners (see Appendix A);
* job-share partners must share information – for this reason national committee and conference papers will be issued to both partners, regardless of which member is actually attending;
* all committee members should be mandated by their nominating body on agenda items, and job-sharers should therefore be clear in advance of the meeting what position has been agreed and should speak/vote accordingly;
* it is essential that there is effective reporting back, both to the job share partner and the nominating body, to ensure consistency in approach.

**The complications**

* members who opt to job-share should be aware that the NEC guidelines on collective responsibility apply to both job share partners, and that a national committee member can therefore only attend the women’s conference in that capacity, not as a branch or regional delegate;
* where regional job sharers are elected to a position on the national women's committee, an individual's term of office will be considered the same as on a non job-share basis (i.e. maximum of two terms) – even though the job share arrangement may mean that a sharer only attends half the meetings;
* in accordance with the NEC guidance, job-sharers may only be nominated to other bodies / roles with their job-share partner. This may have implications e.g. :
* the scheme of branch representation for service group conferences requires that delegates are from the appropriate service group – both job-share partners must therefore be from that service group if seeking nomination as the women’s committee delegates to a service group conference;
* both job share partners would have to meet the appropriate criteria if seeking nomination to another SOG i.e. both be Black in the case of the NBMC:
* both job-share partners must be willing to take on the role if standing for an officer position – i.e. be willing to share the role and duties of vice-chair;
* shared attendance at women’s conference may be problematic as the additional costs of both partners attending must be borne by the nominating body and the “off-duty” job share partner would not be able to participate in conference business.

**APPENDIX A**

This note from the UNISON NEC provides guidance on arrangements for job sharing on UNISON’s national committees. It applies to all indirectly elected national committees. It does not cover directly elected committees such as Service Group Executives or the NEC.

**Definition of job sharing**

* Job sharing is a voluntary agreement under which a committee seat is shared between two people. That means that attendance at meetings of the committee, reporting to and from the committee and any other duties associated with the seat are shared between the job share partners.
* Rights associated with the seat including entitlement to expenses are also shared between the job share partners
* Job sharing should not result in additional costs for the committee concerned with the exception of costs associated with training of committee members. In certain circumstances it may be necessary for such costs to be borne by the region which the job share partners come from.

**Procedure for national committees**

* Only one job share partner can attend each meeting. Job share partners cannot attend meetings as observers.
* All job share partners should receive papers for all meetings of the committee.
* If both job share partners wish to attend a national conference, attendance should be on a shared basis.
* Both job share partners should be able to attend training events organised by the committee.
* Job share partners can put themselves forward for positions such as chair and vice chair of the committee and representatives on working parties or other bodies. However, they can only do so on the basis that they stand together for such positions. Where job sharers are elected to such positions they should alternate the duties. Their ability to attend meetings will remain as described above.

**Responsibilities of regions**

* Regions should ensure that this guidance is followed when elections to national committees are taking place.
* Where a region elects job share partners for more than one seat, the region must specify who is sharing with whom. This must be a fixed arrangement. Regions cannot elect four job share partners for two seats or six partners for three seats etc.
* Regions should ensure that job sharing arrangements take account of the need to maintain proportionality and fair representation.

**Responsibilities of job share partners**

* Job share partners should determine who should attend each meeting.
* Job share partners should ensure that they maintain continuity of input onto to the committee and communicate effectively between meetings.
* Job share partners should make appropriate arrangements for ensuring that they report back to the region.