



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Christopher Kelly
Chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life

3 June 2009

Dear Sir Christopher

Inquiry into Parliamentary Allowances and Expenses

We are writing to you on behalf of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) Women. We are not submitting comprehensive evidence to your enquiry, however, we are very concerned to ensure that your inquiry into MPs' allowances and expenses, is able to take into account the particular needs of women members, and others with caring responsibilities not currently met by the current system. The need for this has been highlighted by recent press articles which suggest that MPs who have been absent, on maternity leave, or caring for sick partners are not good value for money.

We agree that the new system needs to be transparent, and inspire public confidence in MPs, but we feel the issue of MPs with families and small children has not been addressed and in fact having a family with small children is not often conducive to being an MP; for example, the issue of childcare costs and facilities, especially given our unusual hours and varied places of work, and the high costs of families travelling between constituencies and Westminster. We think it essential that there is a proper work/home life balance for MPs and this is not wholly possible under the present system.

Any new system must not create further barriers for under represented groups getting elected as MPs in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Roberta Blackman-Woods MP
Co-Chair, PLP Women's Committee

Fiona Mactaggart MP
Co-Chair, PLP Women's Committee