

Dear Sir Christopher,

I was very pleased to have the opportunity of giving Dame Denise Platt some idea of the work of an MP and I hope she enjoyed her two days with me as much as I enjoyed her company and indeed her probing and pertinent questions.

I was very pleased to read in your document 'Issues and Questions' at para 1.10 on page 3 that your committee believes that 'Arrangements should be flexible enough to take account of the diverse working patterns and demands placed upon individual MPs and should encourage representation from all areas of society; or at least not discourage any individual from becoming an MP.'

In pursuit of flexibility, I would be grateful if your committee could bear in mind the position of those of us whose partners are elected councillors in local authorities which are neither in Central London nor in our constituencies. You will remember that councillors are obliged by law to live or work in the local authority area to which they are elected. Personally, I am married to the county councillor for Rye in East Sussex and he had been elected before I was selected to fight the by-election in Beckenham, the seat I represent in Parliament. I know of at least one other MP who is in a similar position.

By extension this point could well apply to couples where one holds a senior position in one place and the other is selected to fight a seat in another place. While it can be difficult to transfer senior jobs and that should be recognised, the real difficulty is the legal requirement of residence which does not apply to a Member of Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

Jacqui Lait
MP for Beckenham