



The Speaker's
Conference

Speaker's Conference on the employment conditions of Members' staff:

Second Report



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Speaker's Conference

On 22 June 2022, the House passed an Order to establish a Speaker's Conference as follows:

This House considers that it is desirable to consider the employment conditions of Members' staff in order to ensure a more inclusive and respectful working environment, and accordingly agrees that the following Order be made:

(1) There shall be a committee to be known as the Speaker's Conference which shall consist of the Speaker, who shall be Chair, and up to 14 other Members appointed by the Speaker.¹

(2) The Speaker shall appoint one or more of the members of the Conference to act as vice-Chair in his absence.

(3) The Conference shall consider and make recommendations upon the contractual arrangements for the employment of Members' staff.

(4) Notwithstanding any Standing Order of this House, the Conference shall conduct its proceedings in such manner as the Speaker shall determine.

(5) The Conference and any sub committees thereof that the Speaker shall appoint shall have power—

(a) to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House and to adjourn from place to place;

(b) to report from time to time;

(c) to appoint legal advisers, and to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the committee's order of reference.

(4) The Conference shall produce its first report to the House, which shall include a description of the principles underpinning its work, no later than 31 October 2022.

(5) The quorum of the Conference shall be five.

(6) This Order shall have effect until the end of the current Parliament.

Current membership

[Rt Hon Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP](#) (*Speaker, Chorley*) (Chair)

[Sir Graham Brady MP](#) (*Conservative, Altrincham and Sale West*)

[Wendy Chamberlain MP](#) (*Liberal Democrat, North East Fife*)

[Tracey Crouch MP](#) (*Conservative, Chatham and Aylesford*)

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[Andrew Jones MP](#) (*Conservative, Harrogate and Knaresborough*)

[Paul Maynard MP](#) (*Conservative, Blackpool North and Cleveleys*)

¹ Votes and Proceedings, [22 June 2022](#), item 13

[Rt Hon Dame Maria Miller MP](#) (*Conservative, Basingstoke*)

[Wendy Morton MP](#) (*Conservative, Aldridge-Brownhills*) (added 19.01.23)

[Mary Robinson MP](#) (*Conservative, Cheadle*)

Publication

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Summary

On 22 June 2022, the House passed an Order to establish a Speaker's Conference to consider the employment conditions of Members' staff in order to ensure a more inclusive and respectful working environment.

This report sets out the challenges faced by Members' staff in their day to day working lives. In identifying the many challenges faced by Members' staff, we have sought to focus on delivering practical solutions. Those challenges are not inherently related to the identity of the employer. We are therefore not persuaded that the problems we have identified and the issues which have been explored by the Conference would be adequately addressed by a change in the employer. Contractual change is a costly and time-consuming exercise - and is ultimately a blunt instrument.

We conclude that the nature of the work of an MP, and the close working arrangements and personal loyalty between Members and their staff mean that Members should continue to be the employers of their staff.

Our report sets out a wide ranging and comprehensive package of measures which will support Members in their role as employers and deliver meaningful and lasting change in the working lives of Members' staff. These are grouped within three themes:

Community, culture and behaviour

Parliament's collective failure to champion the important work undertaken by Members' staff, both in Westminster and in constituencies across the UK, is both demoralising for Members' staff and has a debilitating impact on their practical ability to do their job. This will only be improved in any meaningful sense by creating a culture which recognises and values the work that they do and makes these staff feel part of the wider Parliamentary community. We make a series of recommendations to the House Administration, Members themselves and to IPSA to address this, including, for example, that staff have access to health and wellbeing services on the same basis as House staff.

HR Support for Members and their staff

While the majority of Members are good employers, best practice is not consistently applied across Members' offices. We recognise the work of the Members' Services Team in providing support to Members and their staff within their existing resources. Providing HR support and guidance for Members is a vital first step in improving the working lives of staff. However, on its own, this is insufficient. We support the fundamental principle that Members' staff should have access to guidance provided by HR-qualified professionals.

We recommend that the Members' Services Team be expanded to increase its support to Members, but more significantly to employ qualified HR professionals to provide support and guidance to Members' Staff. The Members' Services Team should be renamed the Members' and Members' Staff Services Team. This will more accurately reflect the new and enhanced services available to Member's staff following the

implementation of our recommendations. We also recommend the creation of a new resolution service to provide a mechanism for staff to resolve workplace disputes with their employer.

IPSA: regulation and reform

IPSA plays a significant role in and around the employment of Members' staff - providing the template contracts, salary banding and the overall staffing budgets. IPSA's scheme and how it is administered has direct consequences for the day to day working lives of Members and their staff. We ask IPSA to address anomalies in the employment arrangements for Members' staff - specifically to replicate the benefits of continuity of service arrangements so that staff can access a range of benefits. We also recommend that IPSA make changes to the way in which Members' staff salaries are reported – recognising their value as professionals, rather than describing them as a cost or expense.

Next steps

Our report will be debated on the floor of the House in due course. We then expect the House of Commons Commission to establish an implementation team to deliver as many of the recommendations set out in this report as possible before the next General Election. We will continue to monitor the progress of implementation during the rest of this Parliament, and we encourage regular reviews of progress to continue thereafter.

Members' staff play a uniquely valuable role in supporting their Member of Parliament, both in serving their constituents and in delivering Parliamentary democracy in the UK. Our report sets out a comprehensive package of practical measures which offers substantial, meaningful, and deliverable change for Members' staff. Our recommendations will put in place a framework for the provision of access to health and well-being services, professional HR support, and respect for Members' staff as valued members of the Parliamentary community - all of which are long overdue.

Introduction

Background - the Speaker's Conference

1. On 30 March 2022, Mr Speaker announced his intention to set up a Speaker's Conference to review the employment arrangements for House of Commons Members' staff.¹ He said:

It is time to consider radical action and review structures and processes that could make a difference. Some serious allegations have been made, which we must address as a matter of urgency. It is imperative we do the right thing by staff, and MPs as well. [...] I want to make sure everyone feels supported and has somewhere to turn—and make this House not only a safe and inclusive workplace, but a model for other legislatures.²

2. On 22 June 2022, the House passed an Order to establish a Speaker's Conference as follows:

Resolved, That this House considers that it is desirable to consider the employment conditions of Members' staff in order to ensure a more inclusive and respectful working environment, and accordingly agrees that the following Order be made:

(1) There shall be a committee to be known as the Speaker's Conference which shall consist of the Speaker, who shall be Chair, and up to 14 other Members appointed by the Speaker.

(2) The Speaker shall appoint one or more of the members of the Conference to act as vice-Chair in his absence.

(3) The Conference shall consider and make recommendations upon the contractual arrangements for the employment of Members' staff.

(4) Notwithstanding any Standing Order of this House, the Conference shall conduct its proceedings in such manner as the Speaker shall determine.

(5) The Conference, and any sub committees thereof that the Speaker shall appoint, shall have power—

(a) to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House and to adjourn from place to place;

(b) to report from time to time;

(c) to appoint legal advisers, and to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the committee's order of reference.

¹ [*It's time for a re-think on MPs role in staff issues*](#), The Guardian, 30 March 2022.

² Ibid.

(6) The Conference shall produce its first report to the House, which shall include a description of the principles underpinning its work, no later than 31 October 2022.

(7) The quorum of the Conference shall be five.

(8) This Order shall have effect until the end of the current Parliament.—(Mark Spencer.)”³

3. Members of the Conference were formally appointed by Mr Speaker on 14 October 2022. We published our first report to the House on 31 October 2022.⁴ In that report we set out the current arrangements for the employment of Members’ staff and a brief overview of the historic background which provides the context to those arrangements. We also set out our intended approach to our work, and the key principles which have underpinned our work.⁵

Our approach

4. Since then, we have sought to gather evidence from a wide range of stakeholders. We launched a formal call for evidence and undertook informal engagement during the summer of 2022. We held a number of evidence sessions in private to ensure that witnesses felt comfortable sharing their experiences with us, and to facilitate full and frank discussion. We visited the Scottish Parliament, the Swedish Riksdag and the Finnish eduskunta, and engaged with Members and officials of a number of other Parliaments to explore and examine different arrangements for the employment of Members’ staff.⁶

5. This report sets out the challenges faced by some Members’ staff in their working lives. Our focus has been on finding practical and deliverable solutions to improve the working lives of Members’ staff - both for Westminster based staff and those who work in constituency offices. Our proposals and recommendations are set out in Chapters 4–6, and focus on three key areas:

1. Community, culture and behaviour
2. HR support for Members and their staff
3. IPSA: regulation and reform

³ Votes and Proceedings, [22 June 2022](#), item 13

⁴ Speaker’s Conference, First Report of 2022–23, [Speaker’s Conference on the employment conditions of Member’s staff: first report](#), HC 692

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ The Senedd, the Bundestag, and the Canadian Senate

1 Overview

Members' staff: current situation

6. Members recruit and employ their own staff; however, the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) provides model contracts for staff as well as the budget to employ them. IPSA was established by the Parliamentary Standards Act, which received Royal Assent in July 2009. It is an independent body, with three main responsibilities as follows:

- to regulate Members' staffing and business costs.
- to determine Members' pay and pension arrangements.
- to provide financial support to Members' in carrying out their parliamentary functions.⁷

7. As of 26 June 2023, there were 3,672 Members' staff who were registered with IPSA and paid by allowances funded by IPSA. Some Members may employ staff using other methods, of which there is no consistent record.⁸ In 2021–22 the total costs for staffing and Covid staffing budgets was £111,198,724.29, an increase of approximately £5,500,000 over 2020–21.⁹

Financial year	Total spend from staffing and Covid staffing budgets
2020–21	£105,737,939.76
2021–22	£111,198,724.29 ¹⁰

8. The IPSA staffing budget is currently designed to enable a Member to employ five full time equivalent (FTE) staff. There is no minimum or maximum number of staff who can be employed by an individual Member, but costs relating to their salaries, NI contributions, pension contributions and any other costs (such as health and welfare) must be affordable within the overall budget limit.¹¹

9. Members' staff turnover is relatively high, with staff turnover at 30.23% in 2020, following the December 2019 General Election.¹² This rate has since reduced.¹³

⁷ IPSA, [Who we are](#), accessed 26 October 2022

⁸ Members are not obliged to employ staff through IPSA and may, if they choose, use other sources of funding. See also UCL, Constitution Unit, Rebecca McKee, *Staffing Support for MPs*, UCL, forthcoming

⁹ IPSA ([SPC0014](#)). The total spend figures cover the staffing budget and additional budget provided for Covid workload. They do not include costs claimed from other budgets – such as staff absence costs, staffing costs incurred during the winding up period (for those MPs who left Parliament) or costs allocated to the contingency or disability budgets.

¹⁰ Information relating to 2021–22 is in the process of being confirmed via the annual publication process and so numbers may be subject to change. IPSA ([SPC0014](#))

¹¹ There are seven standard job roles available for staff who are funded by IPSA, three in the administrative job family, two in the executive job family and two in the research job family.

¹² IPSA ([SPC0014](#))

¹³ IPSA ([SPC0014](#)). In the same period, House staff turnover ranged between 6.6% (2020–21) and 13.6% (2018–19).

Members' staff turnover	
2017	36.4%
2018	30.2%
2019	28.8%
2020	30.2%
2021	24.4%
2022	17.6%

Members' Services Team

10. The Members' Services Team (MST) was established in April 2020. The Team was set up as a result of the Gemma White KC report into the bullying and harassment of Members' Parliamentary staff (see para 25 below). Amongst other initiatives, the report recommended increased support for Members as employers, and the introduction of pastoral care and signposting to key services for Members' staff.¹⁴

11. The MST provides a Members' HR Advice Service that supports Members (or a nominated HR proxy) in their role as employers of their staff. The Members' HR service was initially established in 2001 and was expanded from two to four staff when the service joined the MST in April 2021.

12. The House has historically offered some direct services for Members' staff, particularly in recent years, but much of this was ad hoc. For example, the House began running regional constituency events for Members' staff in 2014, and although these were virtual during the pandemic, face to face events have recently begun again. The Employee Assistance programme, run by Health Assured, was introduced specifically for Members' staff in 2014.¹⁵ Different House teams also allow Members' staff to access and use services.¹⁶

13. The MST offers Members advice on a whole range of employment issues. The Team deals with a significant number of queries from Members. In September 2022 alone, over 100 Members approached the team for support, raising 199 individual cases.¹⁷ The team also publishes a range of best practice employment guides for Members, which are supported by regular employment workshops targeted at Members. These guides are designed to support Members in their roles as employers and give practical, step by step advice on employment practices. Guides available to date (and published on the Intranet) include appraisals and one-to-one meetings, managing long- and short-term sickness, grievances, managing misconduct, office restructure and recruitment and selection.

14. The Team also offers engagement and pastoral support to all Members' staff, including contact with all new Members' staff as soon as they have an IT account, signposting to key

14 Gemma White KC, *Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff- Independent Inquiry Report*, 19 July 2019, HC 2206, 2017–19, para 14. See Appendix for a list of key recommendations.

15 It was subsequently extended to Members and staff of both Houses.

16 For example, the Digital Local Engagement Team visit Members' constituency offices and regularly engage with their staff; and Members' staff can access some procedural services on their Members' behalf. The House also runs a death in service scheme for Members' staff. More information is available in the *Members' Staff Handbook*.

17 There has been a steady increase in the number of Members, or their HR proxies, who have contacted the MST either in person on the estate, on the phone or by email asking for help with an HR issue. See Annex 1 for details. Some of those issues could be relatively straightforward, resolved over the phone, by email or by talking to the MP or HR proxy in person; some of the issues will be highly complex or serious involving potential dismissal or police involvement, for instance. All of these issues, simple or complex, count as a case.

services, regular all-Members' Staff phone-ins on topics relevant to Members' staff and regular communications about House services and events.¹⁸ The MST runs weekly phone-ins for those staff managing Members' offices (since 2020), virtual drop-in sessions, an Office Manager training course and regular regional constituency events.

15. In addition, the team oversees a number of insurance policies, undertakes research into Member and Members' Staff engagement and interaction with House services, and took on responsibility for MPs' staff training, and some MP training, in November 2022.¹⁹

Historical overview

16. Staff support for Members has been a feature of Parliamentary life since the 19th century, although it has developed and changed substantially during that time.²⁰ Funding for staff support for Members has been in place since the late 1960s, and has gradually grown as the workload of Members, particularly constituency casework, has increased.²¹

18 Topics have included dealing with suicidal constituents, the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, and Restoration and Renewal.

19 Parliamentary Intranet, [Insurance](#), accessed 26 October 2022. Member-facing insurances prior to 2021 were managed from the Members' Hub in the Finance, Portfolio and Performance Team. The Members' and Members' staff training budget was brought into the MST in November 2022, and Member insight into the MST in April 2021. These decisions were made to ensure that the service was properly customer-facing and was able to draw upon the expertise of MST staff in engaging with their customers.

20 The Constitution Unit Blog, [The evolution of MPs' staffing arrangements: how did we get here?](#), accessed 14 October 2022

21 Ibid.

Figure 1: Timeline²²

1969	An Office Costs Allowance (OCA) is introduced for Members. Costs set at £500 per annum to cover one full time secretary.
1971	The Top Salaries Review Body (TSRB) is established.
1972	OCA is increased to £1000, a proportion of which can be spent on research assistance.
1977	MPs are allowed to use the whole OCA allowance for secretarial or research support.
1978	House of Commons Commission is established by the House of Commons (Administration) Act 1978 as the employer for House of Commons staff.
1979	Departmental Select Committees established
1984	The OCA is indexed to civil service salaries.
2001	-OCA separated into Staffing Allowance and Incidental Expenses Provision. -Allowance increased to cover 2 staff. -Standard contracts and pay scales introduced.
2007	Staffing allowance is increased to cover 3.5 staff per Member.
April 2009	House of Commons Commission publishes its report Employment of Members' staff by the House.
July 2009	The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) is established by the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009.
November 2009	Committee on Standards in Public Life publishes its report MPs expenses and allowances: Supporting Parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer.

²² Adapted from The Constitution Unit Blog Rebecca McKee, [The evolution of MPs' staffing arrangements: how did we get here?](#), accessed 14 October 2022. See also UCL, Constitution Unit, Rebecca McKee, Staffing Support for MPs, forthcoming

2012	Staffing allowance is increased to cover up to 4 staff per Member.
July 2018	The Independent Complaints and Grievances Scheme (ICGS) Delivery Report is published by the House of Commons Commission.
October 2018	Dame Laura Cox KC publishes her independent inquiry report <i>The Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff</i> .
July 2019	Gemma White KC publishes her independent inquiry report <i>Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff</i> .
2020	The House of Commons Service establishes the Members' Services Team. Staffing allowance is increased to cover up to 5 staff (and to cover additional staffing costs as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic).
March 2022	The Speaker of the House of Commons announces his intention to establish a Speaker's Conference to review the employment arrangements for staff.
June 2022	House of Commons passes an Order to establish a Speaker's Conference to consider "the employment conditions of Members' staff in order to ensure a more inclusive and respectful working environment".
August 2022	Covid 'uplift' in staffing budget made permanent.

17. In April 2009, the Government proposed a series of changes to the system of allowances.²³ One of these proposals was that Member's staff should (without exception) become direct employees of the House of Commons.²⁴ On 30 April 2009, the House agreed with the Government's motion that "staff who work for an hon. Member should be employed by the House" and tasked the House of Commons Commission to make recommendations for the implementation of this decision.²⁵ The Commission published its report on 27 October 2009.²⁶ The Commission identified four key challenges which would need to be addressed in order to implement the resolution of the House.

- i) How the House could fulfil its legal responsibilities as the employer of Members' staff.

²³ At that time, the system was administered by the House Administration. Since July 2009 (when the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 came into force) these allowances have been administered by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA).

²⁴ HC Deb, 21 April 2009, [cols 10WS-11WS](#) [Commons written ministerial statement]

²⁵ HC Deb, 30 April 2009, [cols 1063-1142](#) [Commons Chamber]

²⁶ House of Commons Commission, [Employment of Members' staff by the House](#), HC 1059, 27 October 2009

- ii) In particular, how it could discharge its responsibilities as an employer in respect of Members' staff based in the constituencies and how it could be a good employer rather than a remote bureaucracy in these circumstances.
- iii) How the consequences of a general election with a large turnover of seats, and especially a large transfer of seats between parties, could be coped with.
- iv) How the additional costs of the House employing Members' staff could be minimised.²⁷

18. While the Commission made a series of practical recommendations for implementing the House's proposal,²⁸ it did not commend the scheme to the House.²⁹ It concluded that the proposal would have heavy costs; would secure no clear benefit; would place Members' staff in an ambiguous employment relationship; and would significantly reduce the flexibility Members had to manage their staff.³⁰ Instead, the Commission stated that its preference would be "for the House (or if appropriate IPSA)" to give greater support to Members as employers.³¹

Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL), MP's expenses and allowances: Supporting Parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer

19. Though finalised before it received a copy of the House of Commons Commission's report, the CSPL's report, published in November 2009, commented on the House's proposal that the House should employ Members' staff. It suggested that "Members should follow high standards of employment" and that there should be "broad parity of treatment for Members' staff across the House of Commons".³² However, it concluded that central employment of staff was not necessary to achieve such standards.³³ Instead it recommended that "MPs should continue to be able to select and directly appoint their own staff" and should "receive appropriate training and HR support".³⁴

The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA)

20. The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) was established by the Parliamentary Standards Act, which received Royal Assent in July 2009. IPSA was required to run a scheme for Members' salaries and allowances to be in place following the General Election of May 2010.³⁵ The subsequent consultation on the operation of the scheme did not raise the question of the employment of Members' staff, but the final Scheme confirmed that nothing in the Scheme "shall be taken to affect the MP's position as the employer of their staff".³⁶

27 House of Commons Commission, [*Employment of Members' staff by the House*](#), HC 1059, 27 October 2009, para 19

28 Ibid., para 104

29 Ibid., para 105

30 Ibid., para 105

31 Ibid., para 106

32 The Committee on Standards in Public Life, [*MPs' expenses and allowances: Supporting Parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer*](#), Twelfth Report, Cm 7724, November 2009, para 6.46–6.47

33 House of Commons Library Paper, [*Speaker's Conference on the employment conditions of Members' staff*](#), 27 July 2022, Research Briefing number 9572

34 The Committee on Standards in Public Life, [*MPs' expenses and allowances: Supporting Parliament, safeguarding the taxpayer*](#), Twelfth Report, Cm 7724, November 2009.

35 House of Commons Library Paper, [*Speaker's Conference on the employment conditions of Members' staff*](#), 27 July 2022, Research Briefing number 9572.

36 Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, [*The MPs' Expenses Scheme*](#), March 2010, HC 501, 2009–10, para 8.7.

The Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS)

21. In response to allegations of inappropriate behaviour in Parliament and subsequent media coverage in November 2017, a cross-party working group was established, under the leadership of the then Leader of the House, Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom MP.³⁷ In July 2018 the group published the ICGS Delivery Report, which set out a new Parliamentary Behaviour Code, and policies and procedures for reporting allegations of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. The report was endorsed by the House of Commons on 19 July 2018.³⁸

22. Further allegations of inappropriate behaviour by Members against staff, highlighted by Newsnight in March 2018, led to an independent review of bullying and harassment in the House of Commons. Dame Laura Cox DBE published her report on 15 October 2018.³⁹ She recommended three fundamental changes to the ICGS: abandoning the Valuing Others policy and the Revised Respect policy (agreed in October 2018); that non-recent allegations of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct should be eligible under the ICGS scheme (implemented in July 2019); and that, for cases where Members' were the subject of allegations, no Members' should play any part in the ICGS process (which led to the establishment of the Independent Expert Panel in June 2020).

23. The scheme currently covers over 15,000 members of the Parliamentary community across both Houses, including Members' staff, visitors and contractors.⁴⁰ In the four years since its establishment, the ICGS has received 176 disclosures from the Helpline, opened 231 cases and resolved (either formally or informally) 133 cases. The 4th Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme's Annual Report was published on 25th October 2022. This reporting year, the ICGS team received 52 disclosures from the ICGS Helpline. From these, 59 cases were started, and 21 cases were completed, with 48% upheld and 52% not upheld.⁴¹

Gemma White KC Report Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff

24. In July 2019, Gemma White KC published her report *Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff*.⁴² Though not specifically commenting on the employment status of Members' staff, she identified "no set of uniform employment procedures for MPs and their staff" and "no collective oversight of MPs' employment practices".⁴³ While several submissions to her inquiry recommended that Members' staff should be employed by an independent body, she concluded that such a proposal was "not appropriate".⁴⁴ She explained that:

37 UK Parliament Independent Complaints and Grievance Policy Programme Team, [Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Delivery Report](#), 17 July 2018

38 HC Deb, 19 July 2018, [column 627](#) [Commons Chamber]

39 Dame Laura Cox DBE, [The Bullying and Harassment of the House of Commons Staff](#), Independent Inquiry Report (October 2018)

40 For example see the report of the Independent Expert Panel, [The Conduct of Mr Christian Matheson MP](#), HC 823

41 Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, [ICGS 4th Annual Report 2021–22](#), 25 October 2022

42 Gemma White KC, [Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff- Independent Inquiry Report](#), 19 July 2019, HC 2206, 2017–19, para 9.

43 Ibid.

44 Gemma White KC, [Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff- Independent Inquiry Report](#), 19 July 2019, HC 2206, 2017–19, Para 14

[m]any Members of Parliament are good employers and in any event a change of employer would not in itself resolve the issues which arise from the day to day working relationship between Members and their staff.⁴⁵

25. Instead, and regardless of employer, she identified that “a properly resourced proactive, department with responsibility for overseeing employment practices in MPs’ offices” was required.⁴⁶ On the basis of that recommendation, the House established the Members Services Team (MST) in February 2020 (see paras 10–15 above).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

2 The working lives of Members' staff

26. The purpose of the Speaker's Conference, as indicated by Mr Speaker from the outset of our work, is to respond to the challenges faced by Members' staff and to consider how these might best be addressed.⁴⁷ The Shadow Leader of the House noted that the House:

should be a model workplace, at the forefront of workers' rights with strong protections in place for Members' staff. The Speaker's Conference must aim to ensure that future generations inherit a safer inclusive Parliament where everyone has somewhere to turn and where good management practices are the expected norm".⁴⁸

We agree.

27. In this Chapter, we set out the key issues faced by Members' staff; our approach to finding solutions is set out in Chapter 3. Our aim throughout the work of the Conference has been to improve the working lives of Members' staff - both those based in Westminster and those located in Parliamentary constituencies throughout the UK.

Key challenges

Community, culture and behaviour

28. Our work is part of a wider goal within the House of Commons to improve standards, behaviours and working conditions for all members of the Parliamentary community. In Chapter 1, we outlined a series of major reports and initiatives which have explicitly sought to address serious concerns about inappropriate behaviour, bullying and harassment. While there is work still to be done, the House has made progress in this area, particularly in the establishment and ongoing improvement of the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS). The ICGS is subject to its own review: allegations of sexual misconduct or bullying and harassment, and the way in which those allegations are addressed and handled are not the focus of our work. Our aim has been to highlight and address the specific employment challenges faced by Members' staff in their working lives.

29. Members' staff are not employees of the House of Commons, they are directly employed by their MP. Historically there has been a cultural perception amongst Members' staff that the House Administration prioritised the concerns and needs of Members and House staff over their own; this was particularly stark for constituency staff.⁴⁹ These feelings of being insufficiently considered, although improving in some areas,⁵⁰ persist in others. Constituency staff report feeling "neglected",⁵¹ while Westminster based staff feel like

47 The Speaker's Conference, First Report of 2022–23, [Speaker's Conference on the employment conditions of Member's staff: first report](#), HC 692

48 Shadow Leader of the House ([SPC0030](#))

49 Prior to 2014, there was very little outreach to constituency offices. The MST set up constituency roadshows in 2014 to start connecting more on a face-to-face basis. Since then, the Parliamentary Digital Service and the Parliamentary Security Department have also set up regional teams to engage more effectively with constituency-based staff.

50 Sarah Petit, Director of Cultural Transformation, Q324. The importance of the work undertaken by Members' staff is recognised in their ability to act on their Member's behalf in accessing Procedural Services, Library research services and HR support (in the case of a Member's nominated HR proxy).

51 Anonymous ([SPC0018](#))

“second class employees”.⁵² This cultural context continues to have a demoralising impact on Members’ staff, who report feeling excluded from the Parliamentary community as follows:

- i) The needs of Members’ staff are not given due priority, despite in many cases, staff acting on behalf of their Member - it should not require escalation to the Member for maintenance and IT issues to be dealt with in good time.⁵³
- ii) There is an imbalance in access to support services, where again constituency staff feel particularly neglected. Members’ staff in Westminster have some access to services like the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service, or support with making reasonable adjustments (albeit not on the same basis as Members and Administration staff),⁵⁴ while constituency staff must rely on their Member to provide such services through IPSA.⁵⁵
- iii) More widely, the public perception that staff salaries and office costs are personal expenses of Members demeans the role played by Members’ staff. The budget for Members to employ staff represents a necessary cost of supporting the work of a Member and supporting constituents. Unfortunate framing of these budgets has discouraged some Members from applying pay increases to their staff,⁵⁶ or allowing constituency staff to travel to Westminster,⁵⁷ for fear of being seen to be claiming more by way of “expenses”. Parliament’s collective failure to champion the important work undertaken by Members’ staff both demoralises staff and creates a perverse incentive to underspend, creating unnecessary pressure on existing staff and ultimately providing a worse service for constituents.⁵⁸

30. In addition to these cultural challenges we have identified some continuing outdated practices and examples of poor behaviour, which present risks both for Members and their staff. In particular, a number of Members still employ staff without granting them a Parliamentary network account.⁵⁹ This makes it difficult for the House Administration to have any visibility of these members of staff, meaning that they have even lower levels of access to support services.

Members as employers

31. Many Members are excellent managers of their staff. A survey conducted by the Unite Union, which received nearly 700 responses, found that 60% of staff were comfortable having discussions with their Member about employment issues,⁶⁰ and the majority of those who had raised a concern about their terms and conditions felt that these had been resolved fairly through a proper process.⁶¹ Nevertheless some Members are poor managers of people, and some staff face challenges even where they have a good employer.

52 Dame Maria Miller, Q41

53 Q390

54 See figure 2 below.

55 Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service booklet, *Services for Members’ and Peer’s Staff*

56 Anonymous ([SPC0013](#))

57 Anonymous ([SPC0032](#))

58 Ian Todd, Chief Executive, IPSA, Q67.

59 Members currently have the option when onboarding staff whether to assign them a network account or not.

60 Unite ([SPC0015](#))

61 Ibid.

32. Dr Ashley Weinberg, Chartered Occupational Psychologist and Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University of Salford, has conducted two surveys of Members' staff wellbeing.⁶² In the most recent survey he identified that based on the prevalence of psychological distress amongst staff, Members broadly fell into three categories as employers:

- i) those who were good employers (the majority);
- ii) those who wished to be good employers, but occasionally reacted negatively to the pressures of their role or could be better employers with the right support (the next largest group), and;
- iii) a small group who were chronically poor employers.⁶³

Overall, about 40% of respondents experienced psychological distress caused by issues in their workplace, double the normal rate reported for the wider population.⁶⁴

33. Evidence submitted to the Conference identifies a number of examples of poor practice. These include:

- i) Staff being unable to take all their allocated holiday, or not having their holiday properly recorded;⁶⁵
- ii) Staff being unable to undertake training courses;⁶⁶
- iii) Constituency staff being denied the opportunity to travel to Westminster;⁶⁷
- iv) Staff being asked to undertake personal tasks for Members unrelated to their Parliamentary or constituency work;⁶⁸
- v) Staff being kept on rolling temporary contracts, providing them with little in the way of job security;⁶⁹
- vi) A culture of rude and aggressive behaviour in response to mistakes.⁷⁰

34. Dr. Weinberg's survey found that while that some Members' staff continue to experience clearly unacceptable instances of bullying and sexual harassment,⁷¹ it is the other examples of poor practice that have the most frequent negative impact on staff wellbeing.⁷²

35. A key reason why these issues present such a challenge to Members' staff is due to the nature of the working relationship between Members and their staff. Where staff have concerns about their employment, or where their relationship with their Member

62 Both surveys, in 2021 and 2023, were conducted on behalf of the Wellness Working Group (an informal group of Members' staff who advocate for better wellbeing support for staff)

63 Dr Ashley Weinberg; Wellness Working Group, Q278 et seq; Wellness Working Group SPC0040

64 Ibid.

65 GMB (SPC0016), Unite (SPC0015)

66 Hive Support Ltd (SPC0022), Marcial Boo (SPC0025)

67 Anonymous (SPC0032); Q75

68 GMB (SPC0016); Dr Ashley Weinberg, Q312

69 GMB (SPC0016)

70 Ibid.

71 Also highlighted by the GMB (SPC0016) and Unite (SPC0015)

72 Dr Ashley Weinberg, 2022–23 Follow-up survey of MPs' staff: Assessing links between the job and mental well-being; Wellness Working Group (SPC0040)

starts to break down, there are few routes through which they can seek support.⁷³ As noted above, the ICGS provides a route for dealing with allegations of sexual misconduct or bullying and harassment, but for issues which fall outside the scope of the ICGS, the person that needs to address those concerns is the Member, their employer.⁷⁴ This creates a power imbalance which means that many such issues, even relatively minor issues, are only resolved by the member of staff leaving employment, with limited options to address the behaviour of those Members who are chronically poor employers.⁷⁵ Gemma White KC described Members' staff as "uniquely vulnerable" members of the Parliamentary community in this sense.⁷⁶

36. These challenges are made more difficult because of insufficient HR support for Members. The Members' Services Team, while highly regarded by Members, is significantly under-resourced.⁷⁷ It is also hampered by the lack of a clear mandate for proactively engaging with Members' offices where it is alerted to potential employment issues.⁷⁸ As a result, the MST is often consulted at a very late stage in employment disputes, where there are limited opportunities to support Members to resolve issues while maintaining employment relationships.⁷⁹ The Team also has limited access to staff data from IPSA, making it hard to identify issues around turnover or sickness absence, or to promote its support services to new staff.⁸⁰

37. There are many staff who face serious challenges working for a Member, even where the Member is an exemplary employer. Staff face chronic overtime,⁸¹ often unpaid.⁸² For Westminster staff, the uncertainty over working hours and the changeable nature of business creates a high-pressure environment.⁸³ For those dealing with constituency casework, whether located in Westminster or in the constituency, the huge increase in cases over the last decade has a similar effect. The Conference has heard from Members and Members' staff that casework has increased massively, with the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis having a particular impact on constituents. In its *Casework & return to office working survey*, IPSA reported that 97% of Members' offices had experienced a large increase in casework since the onset of the pandemic, and this had not abated since.⁸⁴

38. Such challenges are not unique to the Westminster system. Based on interviews with practitioners in Australia, Canada, the UK and New Zealand, Dr Jennifer Lees-Marshment, Associate Professor at the University of Auckland, concluded:

The political staffing world is in crisis. Political staffers are an amazing professional group of passionate public-service orientated individuals who [...] help politicians represent and serve voters. But at its worst, HRM (human

73 Marcial Boo ([SPC0025](#))

74 GMB ([SPC0016](#))

75 Kim McGrath, Head of Members' HR Advice Q240; Dr Ashley Weinberg, Q312

76 Gemma White KC, *Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff- Independent Inquiry Report*, 19 July 2019, HC 2206, 2017–19, Para 9

77 Anonymous ([SPC0010](#)); Parliagender ([SPC0027](#)); Shadow Leader of the House ([SPC0030](#))

78 [House of Commons Commission decision](#), 10 February 2020

79 Kim McGrath, Q244

80 Ibid, Q. 246; Lee Bridges, Director of Policy and Engagement, IPSA, Q53.

81 Unite ([SPC0015](#))

82 Ibid; Dr Ashley Weinberg, 2022–23 Follow up survey, p.29.

83 Anonymous ([SPC0009](#)); GMB ([SPC0016](#))

84 IPSA, *Casework & return to office working survey: Headline Findings*, 2021. See also ([SPC0007](#)) and ([SPC0012](#))

resource management) for political staffers has unprofessional recruitment and selection, unclear expectations, ineffective feedback, confused line management, minimal orientation, opaque career progression, untrained managers, irrelevant training and poor incentives to stay, resulting in high levels of burnout and turnover.⁸⁵

IPSA

39. As set out in Chapter 1, IPSA provide the administrative scheme by which funding for Members' staff is both regulated and delivered. The budget for Members' staff and the arrangements for their employment have evolved over time.⁸⁶ However, current arrangements were devised in the context within which IPSA was created - as a rapid response to significant public concern about the way Members' business costs and personal expenses were managed. The fallout from the events of that time was considerable and had a deep impact on the reputation of Members and our democracy more widely.⁸⁷

40. Independent regulation of Members' salaries and expenses is crucial in continuing to rebuild public confidence in the way that politics is funded. However, the way in which the system is administered - especially the salaries of Members' staff and their office costs - has had unintended consequences. IPSA and Members try to provide proper rights and protections, fair salaries and working conditions for staff - but within an administrative system and wider media culture which still operates beneath the long shadow of the expenses scandal.

41. At an individual level, Members' staff face some key challenges arising from these arrangements. Working for one Member and then changing job to work for another Member is commonplace (with staff often remaining on identical terms and conditions within the same pay scales).⁸⁸ However, statutory entitlements such as redundancy pay and family - related leave and pay depend on the length of time worked for a particular employer, so moving from one Member to another (and therefore to a new employer) restarts the clock for that calculation.

42. More widely, the understandable challenge for IPSA staff of fulfilling their dual roles as both regulator and service provider means that day-to-day dealings with IPSA can be both time consuming and frustrating for Members' staff. Staff report a lack of visible support for managing IPSA processes, and a general feeling that the balance between regulation and service delivery has become overly burdensome, preventing staff from actually delivering the support to Members and constituents for which they are employed.⁸⁹ There have been significant improvements in IPSA's approach since its establishment, but there is clearly further room for improvement, as IPSA itself recognises:

We recognise that a more flexible approach to budgets is required and in 2023/24 we will scope the possibility of an overall budget envelope approach to identify unintended consequences, exacerbation of poor practice, staffing budget risks and the impact on Treasury and NAO financial reporting and

⁸⁵ Dr Jennifer Lees-Marshment, [The HRM of Political Staffers Research Report](#), University of Auckland, May 2023

⁸⁶ UCL, Constitution Unit, Rebecca McKee, Staffing Support for MPs, forthcoming

⁸⁷ IPSA, [Business Plan 2023/24](#), June 2023

⁸⁸ Unite ([SPC0015](#))

⁸⁹ Marcial Boo ([SPC0025](#)); Shadow Leader of the House ([SPC0030](#))

forecasting. We will also address the additional challenges such as varying budget according to need and our desire to secure greater value for money as well as the appropriate degree of flexibility.⁹⁰

43. The arrangements for funding Members' office accommodation also provide their own challenges. While there is rightly proper oversight and scrutiny of how Members are spending public money, the current system creates an incentive to seek out the cheapest possible accommodation. This can result in staff working in poor conditions⁹¹ who may be without access to the standard of services you would expect in a modern workplace to allow staff to undertake their roles effectively.⁹²

⁹⁰ IPSA, [Business Plan 2023/24](#), June 2023, p 9

⁹¹ Unite ([SPC0015](#))

⁹² Marcial Boo ([SPC0025](#))

3 Exploring solutions

44. At the outset, we were tasked with exploring the “employment arrangements for Members’ staff,” including whether Members’ staff should no longer be directly employed by Members but instead be employed by a central body, such as the House of Commons Commission.⁹³

45. In identifying the many challenges faced by Members’ staff, we have sought to focus on delivering practical solutions. Those challenges are not inherently related to the identity of the employer. As one contributor succinctly describes it: “one cannot solve what is at its core an issue of culture by changes to structure”.⁹⁴ This is underlined by the experience of staff in other Parliaments, such as in the Canadian Senate, where a central employment model does not itself prevent serious bad behaviour from occurring.⁹⁵

46. In our first report, we noted that the majority of those submitting written evidence did not favour a central employment model, with some highlighting the significant costs that would be involved in such a change.⁹⁶ The balance of evidence continues to support this view.

Box 1: Changing the employment of Members’ staff

Changing the employer of Members’ staff would have clear and significant legal implications. As the employer of their own staff, Members currently exercise control over how that relationship is managed and they are also responsible for the work involved in fulfilling the duties which flow from being an employer. If the House (or any other body) were to employ Members’ staff, then those duties and responsibilities would shift to the new employer, thereby releasing Members from the associated workload. However, control of how that employment relationship is managed would also have to shift to the new employer; otherwise the new employer would have responsibility without power.

In particular, while Members could continue to have significant involvement in some issues such as the recruitment of staff, decisions in relation to issues such as workplace grievances, disciplinary matters and the ending of an individual’s employment would have to be made by the employer. This is the logical counterpoint to the fact that the potential liability which may arise from those issues would primarily lie with the employer. If a new employer is to be asked to assume those risks, then they will reasonably wish to have control over those decisions, in order to manage the potential for liability and associated costs.

Practical issues would include the transfer of around 3,700 contracts to the new single employer. Legislation protects the rights of employees when the employment relationship changes as part of a transfer. It ensures that employees retain exactly the same hours and rate of pay and other contractual benefits as they had with the former employer.⁹⁷

93 Votes and Proceedings, [22 June 2022](#), item 13

94 Anonymous ([SPC0018](#))

95 CTV News Ottawa, [accessed 21 June 2023]. See also UCL, Constitution Unit, Rebecca McKee, *Staffing Support for MPs*, forthcoming, Chapter 4 for a description of the New Zealand model.

96 Speaker’s Conference, First Report of 2022–23, [Speaker’s Conference on the employment conditions of Member’s staff: first report](#), HC 692, pp. 14–15

97 The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 ([SI 2006/ 246](#))

47. Contractual change is a costly and time-consuming exercise - and is ultimately a blunt instrument. We must be careful to focus our efforts on creating meaningful cultural change rather than relying on a technical change which would have limited impact on day-to-day dealings between Members and their staff. The Shadow Leader of the House endorsed this view:

The aim of the Speaker's Conference is to ensure a more inclusive and respectful working environment. It's wrong to suggest that any one change, such as transferring responsibilities for the employment of Members' staff, would achieve this aim. Ultimately, if there is a change of employer or not it will be Members who work most closely with their staff on a day-to-day basis. The intrinsic power dynamic that exists between a Member of Parliament, who is elected by their constituents, and their staff will always be present to a certain extent. This is unavoidable given the nature of the job. I would like to see the Conference focus on how, through better support from the House for both Members and Members' staff, this dynamic can be better managed.⁹⁸

48. Since 2009, a number of key reviews looking at cultural, behavioural and employment issues within Parliament have considered changes in the employment status of members staff - specifically that Members' staff should be employed directly by the House of Commons. None have considered this to be an effective solution, and the logic underpinning their conclusions remains unchanged.⁹⁹ Indeed, Marcial Boo, former Chief Executive of IPSA, rejected a change of employer as a 'simplistic option' as, fundamentally, it does not reflect the wider structural issues arising from the fact that Members are individual office holders, not employees of the House, and are accountable to the electorate.¹⁰⁰

49. We are not persuaded that the problems we have identified and the issues and challenges which have been explored by the Conference will be adequately addressed by a change in the employer. The nature of the work of an MP, and the close working arrangements and personal loyalty between Members and their staff mean that Members should continue to be the employers of their staff.

50. The rest of this report is designed to explore the challenges we have identified in greater detail. Our recommendations set out both a framework, and some specific proposals to:

- i) create a culture which values the contribution of Members' staff, both in Westminster and constituency offices (Chapter 4);
- ii) drive greater professionalisation in HR practices, recognising the importance of the relationship between Members and their staff, while improving employment conditions and protections for Members' staff; (Chapter 5), and;
- iii) identifying possible changes to the IPSA scheme for employment conditions which will deliver clear benefits to staff (Chapter 6).

51. Our report will be debated on the floor of the House in due course. We then expect the House of Commons Commission to establish an implementation team to deliver as

98 Shadow Leader of the House ([SPC0030](#))

99 See House of Commons Commission, [Employment of Members' staff by the House](#), October 2009, paras 18–19 of this report.

100 Marcial Boo ([SPC0025](#))

many of the recommendations set out in this report as possible before the next General Election. We will continue to monitor the progress of implementation during the rest of this Parliament, and we encourage regular reviews of progress to continue thereafter.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ See Annex 2 for a proposed list of responsibilities for implementation.

4 Community, culture and behaviour

52. The experiences of Members' staff, in both Westminster and the constituency, will only be improved in any meaningful sense by creating a culture which recognises and values the work that they do and makes these staff feel part of the wider Parliamentary community. Delivering meaningful cultural change is not easy, but in this chapter we set out a series of recommendations which we hope will help foster the more inclusive and respectful working environment that hard-working Members' staff deserve.

Members' staff and the Parliamentary community

53. The Parliamentary community includes all those who are part of the work of Parliament. That this community extends beyond Members and the staff of the Administration is not a novel concept - both the ICGS and the House Administration's Workplace Equality Networks take an inclusive approach to defining the community. It is important that we work to ensure that Members' staff, as a distinct group within the Parliamentary community, feel part of the work of the House.

54. However, we recognise that some Members staff, particularly those in constituency offices, often feel little connection to Westminster. The new House Service Strategy for 2023–27 rightly focuses on supporting the core functions of the House. We welcome the more inclusive approach to delivering this strategy, set out in the Corporate plan for 2023–24, which seeks to “[e]nsure that the support available to Members' staff enables them to fulfil their key role within the Parliamentary Community”.¹⁰² Nevertheless, there is more for us all to do to make Members' staff feel part of the Parliamentary community.

55. While we recognise that the House Administration is not the employer of Members' staff, it has a responsibility to drive cultural change in Parliament; to recognise the contribution of Members' staff; and to make them feel part of the wider Parliamentary community. We welcome the approach set out in the Corporate Business Plan and we have identified some specific changes which would help set the tone for the organisation in valuing the contribution of Members' staff and creating a more inclusive culture.

An inclusive approach to supporting Members' staff

56. Some services, particularly procedural processes and support from the House of Commons Library, have taken a pragmatic and inclusive approach towards Members' staff.¹⁰³ There is also an increase in awareness of the importance of providing local support to constituency staff.¹⁰⁴ However, a more strategic approach across all Teams is required to develop a corporate culture which includes Members' staff as part of the Parliamentary community. In practice, this means that support services that are readily available to House staff and Members should also aim to include Members' staff. While there may be some legitimate legal, financial or practical barriers to overcome, the House should

¹⁰² House of Commons, [Corporate Business Plan 2023–24](#), and House of Commons, [House Administration Strategy 2023–27](#)

¹⁰³ For example, Members' staff can table Parliamentary Questions on their Members' behalf via the e-Tabling system, and can directly access the Library Research Service when undertaking work on behalf of their Member.

¹⁰⁴ For example, both the Digital Service and the Parliamentary Security Department have local engagement teams who serve different regions, as does the Education and engagement outreach team.

make these services inclusive by default, and identify options to address potential barriers wherever possible, rather than starting from a position where these barriers are assumed to prevent or limit the provision of support.

57. We recommend that the House Administration reset its approach to providing support services to Members' staff, to provide such services by default unless there are legal, financial or practical barriers to providing services that cannot reasonably be overcome.

58. We welcome the recent creation of a new role of Director of Members' Staff Engagement as a clear commitment on the part of the House Administration to improve services and support for Members' staff. We recommend that the Director work closely with the House Administration to monitor progress in the integration of staff into the Parliamentary community and the extension of the delivery of House services to Members' staff.

Expanding key support services

Parliamentary health and wellbeing services

59. The Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service provides medical advice, guidance and support to Members and House staff. Members or House staff who need support with their physical or mental wellbeing can seek confidential support from the Service, and can access a range of services on site.¹⁰⁵ Where specific adjustments are needed to assist a Member or a member of House staff in their work, the Workplace adjustments case manager can support individuals to identify and purchase relevant equipment.¹⁰⁶

60. By contrast, Members staff only have access to the Employee Assistance Programme, which can provide online and telephone support on a range of issues, including financial issues including debt; family and relationship problems; legal and consumer issues; health and wellbeing information; and stress at home or work.¹⁰⁷ While they can seek advice from the Workplace adjustments case manager, any adjustments need to be sourced by the member of Members' staff, funded by IPSA.

¹⁰⁵ Parliamentary Intranet, [Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service](#), accessed 21 June 2023

¹⁰⁶ Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing booklet, *Services for Members of both Houses*. Note that the Workplace Adjustments Case Manager can only purchase equipment for Members to use on the Parliamentary Estate, not in their constituency offices.

¹⁰⁷ Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing booklet, *Services for Members' and Peers' staff*

Figure 2: Current provision of Health and Wellbeing Services

Provision	House staff	Members	MPs staff (Westminster based)	MPs staff (constituency based)
Occupational Health Services: PHWS in-house Service for Occupational Health including access to Specialist Nurse Practitioner, OH Physician and Psychiatrist	✓	✓		
Onward referral for counselling and specialist therapy can be made via EAP	✓			
Employee Assistance Programme (Health Assured)	✓	✓ _(IAP)	✓	✓
Wellbeing Workshops/Team Talks	✓			
Mindfulness Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓
Health & Wellbeing Events Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓
Qualified Mental Health First Aiders	✓	✓	✓	
Access to the Minor Treatment Clinic (Nurse) in the Lower Waiting Hall	✓	✓	✓	
Access to the on-site GP Service	✓	✓	✓	✓ ₁₀₈
Eyecare Voucher Provision	✓	✓		
Flu Vaccination Programme	✓	✓	✓	✓
Physiotherapy (Westminster Gym): 12-week programme to support health condition management, wellbeing classes e.g. yoga, Pilates etc	✓			
Physiotherapy service and 12-week support programme through Westminster Gym (self-funded by Members)		✓		
Physiotherapy service and 12-week support programme through Westminster Gym (self-funded by staff)			✓	
Workplace Adjustments provided by Workplace Adjustments Case Manager and in collaboration with Inclusion and Diversity Teams	✓			

108 The aim of the on-site GP service is to provide acute and urgent medical assistance. The service is not routinely available to constituency-based MPs staff but if they are visiting Westminster and require assistance, the Nurse would make an assessment and if appropriate, arrange an appointment with the on-site GP.

Provision	House staff	Members	MPs staff (Westminster based)	MPs staff (constituency based)
Trauma Risk Incident Management (TRIM) A process assessing the risk of ongoing psychological distress following exposure to a potentially traumatic event, and ensuring appropriate support is implemented	✓	✓	✓	✓
Manager Advice and Coaching: One off coaching sessions are available to managers who may be supporting team members through physical or emotional difficulty – these sessions aim to increase manager knowledge, skills and understanding and help them to support their staff.	✓			
Physician, Psychiatry, Specialist Addiction Services, Memory Clinic, Disability Support Assessments and Travel Support Assessments		✓		
Lifestyle health screening		✓		
Counselling via:- • In-house (Wellbeing Practitioner) • External – access to off-site talking therapies • access to counselling, legal and financial advice, guidance & support		✓		
No formal service in place for Occupational Health support but guidance on arranging OH Referrals can be accessed via the Members HR Advice Team			✓	✓
Civil Service Sports Council – self funded (a membership organisation which provides a huge range of sports, leisure, health and retail opportunities nationwide to all Parliamentary staff	✓	✓	✓	✓
Charity For Civil Servants – Benevolent Fund	✓			

Box 2: Staff welfare and training costs

IPSA added £4,000 per Member to its 2020–2021 staffing budget for welfare and training costs for their staff. This increase was intended to cover two to three days of training and support for mental health and wellbeing per year for each staff member, as well as one-off health and welfare costs, such as eye tests or occupational health assessments, but this budget is significantly underspent. In 2018–19, the average (mean) expenditure on such costs was about £940, or around 0.6% of the total staffing budget. It is possible that this underspend is a consequence of the perception issues we highlighted in Chapter 2.

Source: Pay, tax & benefits | IPSA (ipsaonline.org.uk)

61. Access to the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service serves as an important case study of the improved approach which we are advocating, ultimately Members' staff should have access to the support they need in the most efficient and effective manner possible. We must be mindful of the boundaries of legal responsibility between Members as employers and the House Administration as a service provider, but we should seek to implement a solution which provides equivalent access to Members' staff as members of the Parliamentary Community.

62. Given our overall conclusion that Members should remain the employers of their staff, we do not suggest that the House Administration take formal responsibility for the wellbeing of Members' staff - this rightly remains with individual Members.

63. *In line with our core principle about access to support services, we recommend that the House Administration expand the remit of the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service, and the role of the Workplace Adjustments Case Manager, to offer services to Members' staff on an equivalent basis to Members and House staff. This could be achieved by offering such services for a fee, paid for by Members using their allowance with IPSA.*

Flu vaccination clinics

64. Another example of a service where there has been inconsistent access across different groups is the annual on-site flu vaccination clinic. Even when Members' staff have been able to access this service, in practice it is of little benefit to constituency staff. ***Access to the on-site flu vaccination clinic or vouchers should be open to Members' staff on the same basis as Members and House staff. Vouchers would be particularly useful in allowing constituency staff to access similar services locally.***

Sharing House values

65. Beyond direct services providing support to staff, the House can also assist Members in developing and implementing best practice. The Members' Services Team already provides such support on employment issues, but there are other areas where the House could support Members to improve culture and behaviours - thereby protecting Members and their staff. The Cultural Transformation Team (CTT) within the House Administration, which was established following the Cox report, works to promote cultural change within the House administration. Sarah Petit, Director of Cultural Transformation, described the work of the team:

some of our work relates specifically to bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. That includes prevention initiatives, such as the Behaviour Code awareness [...] building the confidence to challenge poor behaviour appropriately, and supporting leaders and managers in the House Service in doing that.

...

The rest of my work is about broader organisational cultural issues, which, in the House Service, includes ensuring that we are impartial, value for money, and working well together across team boundaries.¹⁰⁹

66. It is not currently part of the CTT's role to provide similar advice to Members, but the team are keen to do more with Members and their staff, supporting Members to understand the benefits of being a good employer.¹¹⁰ While it would not be appropriate for the House to dictate a particular approach to Members, guidance on best practice should be provided to Members who wish to receive it.

67. We recommend that the House of Commons Commission task the Cultural Transformation Team with proactively engaging with Members and their staff to provide guidance on best practice to Members.

Public perceptions and the value of Members' staff

68. As set out in Chapter 1, the Members' staffing budget is set by IPSA, and IPSA reports on its website the individual expenditure on staffing of each Member of the House. Over half of IPSA's annual £217m budget is accounted for by Members' staff salaries and "related costs".¹¹¹

69. It is vital that there is transparency about the way that this public money is spent, but the current approach to publishing this data creates a misplaced perception that the money allocated for Members' staff salaries is part of Members' personal expenses, rather than a necessary cost of supporting an effective and functioning representative democracy.

70. The IPSA website lists staff salaries and office accommodation costs on the same page as Members' own salaries and expenses, and there is little contextual information to help members of the public understand the important work undertaken by Members' staff funded through this budget. While IPSA no longer describe staff costs as "expenses", there is still more to be done to combat misunderstandings.

71. As well as supporting Members in conducting their Parliamentary functions, Members' staff play a key role in directly supporting constituents, with many Members' offices acting as the last resort for people facing serious hardship or injustice, who have exhausted other avenues for support. It demeans and devalues the hard work that staff of all political persuasions do to support both the functioning of Parliament and the communities their Member represents, to present their salaries as Members' own expenses.

¹⁰⁹ Sarah Petit, Director of Cultural Transformation, Q323.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., Q331–3.

¹¹¹ IPSA, [Annual Report and Accounts 2021–22](#), HC 853, 15 December 2022

72. We note that IPSA “are developing proposals for changing the way we present our publication data to improve contextualisation and reduce the risk of misinterpretation”.¹¹² We welcome this approach, but *we recommend that, to minimise the risk of misinterpretation, IPSA publish information on staff salaries and office accommodation costs separately from Members’ own salaries and expenses, making clear that the funding is part of the support provided for Members to conduct Parliamentary work and that this provides an important public benefit.*

73. Misplaced perceptions about the costs of Members’ staff salaries also create unintended consequences for the staff themselves. As we reported in Chapter 2, some Members discourage their staff from travelling to Westminster, or from undertaking training to avoid being seen to be claiming more in ‘expenses’.¹¹³ This both isolates staff from the wider Parliamentary community and hinders their professional development. Some Members deliberately underspend their staff budget,¹¹⁴ likely for the same reason, putting greater pressure on the staff they employ and ultimately risking providing poorer support to their constituents.

74. **Members’ staff need to travel to Westminster as part of their work, and they are entitled to seek continuous professional development. While oversight of public spending is important, it should not, as an unintended consequence or otherwise, result in unfair treatment of staff.**

75. *We recommend that the IPSA budget for Members’ staff travel and training be reported on as a whole rather than on a per-Member basis (for example, in the way security costs are aggregated when published).*

Access to the Parliamentary community

76. This change in approach should help to address the cultural perceptions around the value of Members’ staff. Improved access to support services should help to ensure that Members’ staff are not isolated or left to manage challenges alone.

77. However, this approach will only be effective if the House Administration and IPSA have a full and accurate picture of staff working for Members. We have identified a number of outdated employment practices that mean that some staff are not visible to those services designed to support them:

- i) there is a particular challenge where Members employ staff without a Parliamentary network account, who cannot therefore access important information about the support services available to them on the parliamentary network.
- ii) Employment of casual staff, who can be under 18, can create significant risks for the Member, as well as for the minor themselves, if adequate safeguarding policies are not properly in place.¹¹⁵

¹¹² IPSA, [Business Plan 2023/24](#), June 2023, p 7

¹¹³ See para 29

¹¹⁴ See para 150

¹¹⁵ Chris Sear, Director, Members’ Services Team, Q2.

- iii) Some Members also employ staff who are not funded through the IPSA staffing budget, and who therefore do not appear on IPSA's records.¹¹⁶ The alternative routes by which such posts are funded raises questions about the potential for undue influence on Members' work, even where such funding is correctly registered.

These practices together create a group of staff who are otherwise invisible to the services and safeguards designed to support them, as well as creating unnecessary risks for the Members who employ them.

78. Subject to passing the necessary security checks, we recommend that all staff employed by Members be given a Parliamentary network account to allow them to access the online Parliamentary community.

79. We recommend that the House Administration provide guidance on best practice to Members on ensuring that safeguarding policies are used effectively within their offices.

Behaviour

80. We have identified some key challenges for the House Administration and IPSA which, if addressed, should improve the experience of Members' staff and give them the recognition they deserve. However, we cannot ignore the role of Members in improving practice, culture and behaviours. While the majority of Members treat staff fairly, and strive to be good employers, it is clear that from the evidence that we have heard a number of our colleagues need to take ownership of improving the way that they treat their staff. We set out a range of options for improving support to Members as employers in the next chapter, but nevertheless changes in behavioural norms and practices must be driven by Members themselves.

81. We urge colleagues to respond positively to the changes proposed by this report, and to have an honest dialogue with their staff about whether they themselves can drive positive change, in the knowledge that the Members' Services Team will provide its valuable support to any Member who wishes to improve the working lives of their staff.

¹¹⁶ See UCL, Constitution Unit, Rebecca McKee, *Staffing Support for MPs*, forthcoming

5 HR support for Members and their staff

82. Members are the employers of their staff and as such have a series of legal obligations towards them, including those set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996. These legal obligations underpin professional HR standards and best practice. These standards must be delivered and consistently applied across all offices to ensure staff are protected and can thrive in a positive workplace environment. It is crucial that support is given to Members as the employers of their staff.

83. Many Members, though not all, have no prior experience employing staff or of managing a team. Even when they do have that experience, managing a small team in the House of Commons is often a different experience to managing staff in other environments. Although training and advice on employing staff is provided as part of the new Members' induction process, there is limited take up of the ongoing training currently available.¹¹⁷

84. The impact on Members' staff of an employer who has little experience of managing staff and who does not undertake training can be extensive.¹¹⁸ Poor management and employment practices have an impact not just on staff's professional lives and potential career development, but also on their physical and mental health and wellbeing.¹¹⁹

85. Providing HR support and guidance for Members is a vital first step in improving the working lives of staff. However, on its own, this is not sufficient. During the course of our work we heard repeated calls for the provision of dedicated HR support for Members' staff. Dame Andrea Leadsom noted that:

there still remains a lack of a proper induction, training, exit interview or general workplace grievance system in place. It's my view there needs to be an HR department for MP's staff.¹²⁰

This was supported both by individual members of staff;¹²¹ staff groups like Unite¹²² and the GMB;¹²³ as well as external campaign groups like Compassion in Politics.¹²⁴

86. In this chapter we therefore set out a series of recommendations which will: expand HR support and training currently available to Members; expand support for Members' staff through the provision of a new package of measures, and propose new initiatives to address poor employment practices and behaviours.

¹¹⁷ For example, see Shadow Leader of the House (SPC0030)

¹¹⁸ Chartered Management Institute ([SPC0021](#))

¹¹⁹ Dr Ashley Weinberg, Q 278

¹²⁰ Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom MP ([SPC0002](#))

¹²¹ E.g. Sarah Coleby ([SPC0003](#)); Max Darby ([SPC0004](#)); Sue Hynard ([SPC0006](#))

¹²² Unite ([SPC0015](#))

¹²³ GMB ([SPC0016](#))

¹²⁴ Compassion in Politics ([SPC0023](#))

Members' Services Team

87. In July 2019, Gemma White KC published her report *Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff*.¹²⁵ In that report, she identified that “a properly resourced proactive, department with responsibility for overseeing employment practices in MPs' offices” was required.¹²⁶ On the basis of that recommendation, the House established the Members Services Team (MST) in February 2020.¹²⁷

88. The MST includes the Members' HR Advice Service, a long-standing service which was incorporated into the MST in April 2020. Through this service, the MST offers HR support to Members - and nominated HR proxies - as the employers of their staff, a service that includes the publication of a range of best practice guides, and workshops to support those best practice guides. This service is currently provided by four trained HR professionals and, as of April 2023, was providing support on HR issues to approximately 100–120 Members per month (compared to around 20 a month when the service was first incorporated into MST).¹²⁸

89. In a letter to the Conference, the Chair of the Administration Committee, Sir Charles Walker MP, highlighted the “the value of ensuring that Members have access to high quality HR advice so that they can be good employers and can manage their offices effectively”. He also noted that the creation of “dedicated Members' Services Team was “a significant development” in this regard which “consolidated in one place the practical support provided”.¹²⁹ That Members trust the MST and seek its support is testament to the team's success.

90. In only three years, the MST has succeeded in establishing trusted and effective working relationships with both Members and their staff, based on the efficient and effective delivery of key HR services of value to Members and their staff.

91. *We recommend that the recently created role of Director of Members' Staff Engagement be formally located within the MST to provide oversight of the delivery and implementation of the enhanced provision for Members' staff as set out in this report.*

92. *We further recommend that the Members' Services Team be re-named the Members' and Members' Staff Services Team (MMSST) in order to more accurately reflect its work and the new and enhanced provision for Members' staff recommended in this report.*

Support for Members as employers

93. While Members value the support provided by the MST, it is clear from the examples of poor practice which we set out in Chapter 2 that there are significant HR challenges

¹²⁵ Gemma White KC, [Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff- Independent Inquiry Report](#), 19 July 2019, HC 2206, 2017–19.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, para 9

¹²⁷ A full list of services provided by the MST is included in Annex 1. The team has increased in size from 3 to 14 staff as different services have been brought into the MST, including Member insurances, Members' staff training, and Insight.

¹²⁸ MST data indicates that the number of cases brought to the Members HR Advice Service since it was incorporated into MST in April 2020 has increased by 486%, and the number of Members or their proxies using the service has increased by 381% in the same period, with the same number of staff. See Annex 1 for more data.

¹²⁹ Sir Charles Walker MP ([SPC0033](#))

which still need to be addressed. We have identified a package of additional services and new ways of delivering current services, which would enhance the support provided to Members in their role as an employer of their staff.

94. The MST has proved the value of a hands on and customer-led approach to supporting Members and their staff. We recommend that the team be expanded with the addition of 6 FTE HR staff, to enable the team to manage the increasing demands on existing services and to expand the range of services on offer.¹³⁰

Expanding MST services

Proactive HR support

95. At present, MST services are largely reactive; accessed by Members and their staff who are actively seeking assistance, support or advice. However, many of the problems and issues which arise in Members' offices could be more easily addressed, and prevented from escalating, if the MST were able to be more proactive in their dealings with Members and their staff. Kim McGrath, Head of Members' HR, told us:

The ones we are worried about are the ones who do not come to us. We know that they are the ones that may be still [not following proper processes], and that is a worry.¹³¹

96. The Members' Services Team is not explicitly empowered to proactively engage with Members' and their offices, as this was not part of their remit when set up by the Commission in 2020. We recommend that the Commission give a clear direction to the MST that it has the authority to proactively engage with Members.

97. In order for this more proactive approach to be effective, the MST will need to have proper visibility of the Members and staff it is seeking to support. In addition to the changes in culture we have identified in Chapter 3, to bring all Members' staff into the Parliamentary community, it is also important to ensure that the MST has accurate and up to date data. Currently the Members' Services Team has insufficient access to data about Members' staff held by IPSA, which prevents them from adequately engaging with new starters and hinders the recognition of problematic patterns which might merit further investigation, for example significant levels of staff turnover within an office or repeated use of rolling short-term contracts.

98. We recommend that the House Administration and IPSA amend their data sharing agreement to provide for IPSA to share data (in real time where possible) on new starters, leavers and sickness absence with the MST.

Customer Account Managers

99. A network of dedicated Account Managers within the MST would allow for regular check-ins with Members on employment issues. Check-ins should be annual as

¹³⁰ The estimated annual cost of this increase in resource would be £337,998, including on-costs.

¹³¹ Kim McGrath, Q244.

a minimum; but could be more frequent. This would allow for ongoing support for a Member on a range of other HR issues, such as probation, sick leave or grievances, and for cases to be followed through from start to finish.

100. Annual check-ins would provide an opportunity for Account Managers to highlight the wide range of services already provided by MST and provide signposting to other key services, as levels of awareness of the services currently available vary from Member to Member and amongst their staff. Check-ins would also enable MST staff to acquire a more sophisticated and nuanced awareness of wider health and wellbeing issues within Members' offices, and to tailor and publicise services accordingly.

101. This new approach to the delivery of services and increased levels of engagement between Members and the MST would provide more opportunities for Members to access the right support. Crucially, it would also provide a named contact who both the Member and both their Westminster and constituency-based staff could approach in confidence. Direct access to a dedicated named contact within the MST would help provide access to, and promote inclusion within, the wider Parliamentary community.¹³²

102. *We recommend that the MST establish a system of dedicated Customer Account Managers, to enable them to be more proactive in supporting Members to deliver professional HR standards and best practice within their offices.*

Recruitment support

103. As indicated by the IPSA data set out in paragraph 9, staff turnover in Members' offices is high. Members therefore face ongoing challenges in dealing with the recruitment and retention of staff. Unite suggested that "a chronic issue has been too many posts not being advertised and instead being given to friends and cronies." It notes that this can lead to frustrations when job expectations are not met, reduces diversity across the pool of MPs' staff, and (to the extent that jobs working for politicians can for some be the first rung on the ladder to elected office) restricts opportunities for a political career for those not already with insider contacts".¹³³

104. High staff turnover also means that recruitment is an ongoing, and often time consuming, demand on Members' time. Members regularly request support from the MST in relation to a wide range of recruitment issues. Unite indicated that they "would welcome a more professionalised structure around recruitment, including the involvement of the HR department as independent figures".¹³⁴ Compassion in Politics called for "an independent and fully-resourced Human Resources department to create and manage the recruitment practices of MPs".¹³⁵ Recruitment support is provided to Members in both the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Senedd.¹³⁶

¹³² This would also help to build on the regional contacts the House and the MST have developed through the programme of regional constituency events that have run since 2014. These have been well received and numbers of attendees are high (see Annex 1), showing that there is real demand for more locally-based connections.

¹³³ Unite ([SPC0015](#))

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Compassion in Politics ([SPC0023](#))

¹³⁶ See UCL, Constitution Unit, Rebecca McKee, *Staffing Support for MPs*, forthcoming, Chapter 4. From our visits to Scotland and Wales we learned that administration staff advise on best practice for the overall recruitment process, provide template job descriptions, provide a bank of interview questions and relevant testing materials. Posts are advertised on the relevant parliamentary websites.

105. Recruitment support could include, for example, drafting and placing advertisements, advising on suitable selection criteria and questions, supporting the sifting of applications; and where needed, and, where requested and where resources allow, staff attendance at an interview panel.

106. This support would be available to Members on an optional basis. The House Administration has historically been cautious in providing recruitment support to Members due to the risk of House staff being drawn into any employment disputes. Under our proposed scheme, Members would retain their independence in the selection and recruitment of staff but could access a range of advice and practical support in doing so.

Support for new Members

The start of a new Parliament

107. Newly elected Members of Parliament face a particular set of challenges. The experience of being elected to Parliament for the first time is life-changing. The perceived urgency from the immediate barrage of constituency cases can put great pressure on new Members and lead some to make hasty initial choices about who to employ and how to structure their offices. Some may appoint their campaign manager to run their office, even though quite different skills are needed to be effective in these different roles. Some recruit based on political loyalty rather than capability.¹³⁷

108. In her 2019 report, Gemma White noted that “the speed with which Members feel that they need to appoint staff, combined with the lack of requirements for a fair and transparent procedure creates a risk of poor decisions being made in relation to appointments”.¹³⁸ This can take time, stress and cost to resolve when things eventually unravel. The House operates a comprehensive and wide-ranging induction for new Members of Parliament, including the provision of a New Members’ Reception Area where new Members receive their passes, IT, an IPSA briefing and support from other House services. There are a series of induction events including a Chamber briefing and training sessions on security, setting up an office and managing staff, amongst others.

109. However, new Members have reported that this happens very quickly after an election, with little follow up. Given the many competing draws on Members’ time, and the sheer volume of new information that Members receive in their first few days in the House, it is understandably hard for the importance, value and range of HR support services on offer to sink in. Member’s role and responsibilities as an employer are not necessarily high on the list of priorities.

110. We discussed these issues with the party Whips of the main political parties, the Leader, and Shadow Leader, of the House. They all recognised the value of providing training and support on recruitment and employment best practice to new Members, while acknowledging the time pressure at the start of a new Parliament made it difficult to provide adequate training and support for new Members. All concurred that, ideally,

¹³⁷ Marical Boo (SPC0025)

¹³⁸ Gemma White KC, *Bullying and Harassment of MPs’ Parliamentary Staff: Independent Inquiry Report*, 19 July 2019, HC 2206, 2017–19, para 153

some initial information about the legal responsibilities of Members as employers should be provided to candidates. We understand that some engagement with the main political parties on this issue is already underway, and we welcome this approach.

111. New Members face particular challenges in the first few weeks with a lack of staff support. This can incentivise hiring people quickly rather than identifying the best people for a role.

112. The new Member induction process, overseen by the House Administration's General Election Planning Group, provides welcome support to new Members. Nevertheless, it is important to give greater prominence to advice and support on recruitment and employment practices. *We recommend that specific events for new Members on recruitment and employment responsibilities take place in the House of Commons Chamber in the first few days of a Parliament, to underline the importance of these events and the value of the advice on offer.*

113. The party Whips welcome the idea of providing more time for support and training for new Members at the start of a Parliament. Even delaying the start of formal business by two or three days, or by carving out time in the first few days of formal business for training and support sessions, would have a substantial impact on the experience of new Members.

114. *We urge all political parties to recognise that this approach has wide-spread cross-party support and make this part of the planning assumption in the first weeks of a new Parliament.*

115. We welcome the work being undertaken by the Director of Member Engagement to provide clear advice to prospective candidates, through political parties, about their responsibilities as employers and managers.

Model Offices

116. There is no job description for Members of Parliament. Members rightly have the flexibility to undertake their roles in whichever way they think best. Some Members choose to focus more on their constituencies, others on Westminster and the Chamber. Members' focus can also change over time, depending on their personal or political priorities. This means that the way Members organise their offices also varies significantly, to reflect the priorities of individual Members.¹³⁹ For new Members, working out how best to structure their offices can take time, and without support Members may end up with an office structure which does not serve their needs, increasing the risk of an employment issue developing.

117. While it would not be appropriate for the House Administration to dictate to Members how they organise their staff, the accumulated experience of previous Members can be a useful guide for new Members to assist them in setting up the structure of a new office, or in seeking to reorganise an existing arrangement. We discussed support on office structures with the Whips, who agreed that guidance would be helpful, but that it must be for Members themselves to decide how to implement.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ For example, see UCL, Constitution Unit, Rebecca McKee, *Staffing Support for MPs*, forthcoming, chapter 6.

¹⁴⁰ Qq 167–171

118. *We recommend that the Members' Services Team work with political parties to build up a bank of examples of effective office structures. The best practice guides which the MST already publish provide a model for the way in which such advice could be distributed.*

Support for Members' staff

Members' staff HR

119. As noted above (paragraph 85) we identified widespread support for the creation of a HR service for Members' staff.¹⁴¹ Contributors argued that such a service could provide a more effective route for resolving grievances;¹⁴² provide improved welfare support to Members' staff;¹⁴³ or offer mediation.¹⁴⁴ Some argued for an independent HR service for Members' staff, to provide "stronger HR support than that which is available from IPSA or the House".¹⁴⁵

120. We recognise the need for greater support services, but as we have set out earlier in this report, our aim is to improve outcomes, rather than focussing on specific structural solutions. We have identified a number of possible improvements to support which could be provided by the MST, but we are not recommending the creation of a separate "HR Service" for Members' staff. There are no clear parallels in either the public or private sectors for a dedicated HR service for staff.¹⁴⁶

121. The HR service provided by the House of Commons, like other employers, is a management resource. It is designed to support the employer in ensuring good practice when managing staff. House staff requiring support on employment issues can approach their trade union, seek advice from ACAS's helpline, or take their own legal advice. The House's professional HR service do, however, signpost staff to relevant documentation, policies and guidance.

122. The MST currently engages directly with Members' staff in order to offer them signposting to key services such as the trade unions, ICGS, MAPSA and wellbeing support, as well as providing pastoral care and a range of events and training support.¹⁴⁷ The staff in the team working on engagement and support within MST are separate to, but work closely with, the Members' HR Advice Service, but do not offer HR advice.

141 Kim McGrath, Head of HR Services MST

142 Rt Hon. Dame Andrea Leadsom ([SPC0002](#)), Max Darby ([SPC0004](#))

143 Parligender ([SPC0027](#))

144 Sue Hynard ([SPC0006](#))

145 GMB ([SPC0016](#))

146 Kim McGrath, Q223

147 This includes running the new Members' staff induction course, contacting new Members' staff when their accounts are set up, hosting events on a range of subjects, running the House Services Fair, regional events for constituency staff and a weekly Members' Office Management phone in.

123. While Members' staff have access to the best practice guidance produced by the MST, they do not currently benefit from signposting from professionally qualified HR staff. Professionally qualified HR staff within the MST would be able to signpost to these guides and crucially help Members' staff with interpreting them, explaining the content of relevant legislation and policies and what individuals should expect from their employer.¹⁴⁸ While we note the central role and impact of both the Members' staff unions and the Members' and Peers' Staff Association (MAPSA) in providing support for Members' staff, Member's staff should have access to accurate and consistent guidance provided by professional HR staff.

124. This service would not extend to advocacy or advice in supporting a member of staff through a grievance procedure. In the same way that HR advocacy or advice is not given to House staff in the event of an employment dispute, it would be inappropriate and unfeasible for the House to provide advocacy or advice to Members' staff in HR cases, in which the House provides HR advice to the Member as the employer.¹⁴⁹

125. *We support the fundamental principle that Members' staff should have access to guidance provided by HR qualified professionals. We recommend that the MST budget be expanded to provide for 4 FTE professionally qualified HR staff to deliver this new service to Members' staff.*¹⁵⁰

126. We set out further options for improved HR support services in the rest of this chapter.

Wellbeing services

127. In addition to support from qualified HR professionals, we have also identified a growing demand for wellbeing and mental health support services amongst Members' staff.¹⁵¹ We previously recommended that the full range of the House's Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service be extended to Members' staff. This should be further complemented by the provision of additional mental health resilience training for Member's staff, to be accessed via the MST.¹⁵²

128. The harrowing nature of many constituency cases can have a severe impact on mental health, with some staff suffering persistent effects from the serious cases they do their best to deal with. Dr Weinberg's research found that 60% of those experiencing psychological distress cited the volume and nature of constituency cases as a contributing factor.¹⁵³ An anonymous staffer described the sort of things that caseworkers had to deal with as follows:

¹⁴⁸ As of June 2023, there are 21 best practice guides covering a range of HR matters, including a Good Line Manager Guide, and guides on Recruitment and Selection, Grievance, Probation and Induction and Office Restructure. All these guides are available on the Parliamentary Intranet and many of them have been backed up by online workshops.

¹⁴⁹ This model is used by the Scottish Parliament. During our visit to Holyrood we heard that trained HR staff working for the Scottish Parliament's Corporate Body provide explanations of policies to MSPs' staff, but they have a clearly defined remit and do not provide an advocacy service. This approach is considered to be effective by both MSPs and their staff.

¹⁵⁰ The estimated annual cost of this increase in staff resource would be £187,352, including on costs.

¹⁵¹ Wellness Working Group ([SPC0040](#))

¹⁵² See for example, CiC, [Stress & Resilience Support](#), accessed 6 July 2023

¹⁵³ Dr Ashley Weinberg, Follow up Survey of MPs' staff, p. 12.

working through an inbox filled with abuse, pictures of maimed children in war-torn countries, constituents in desperate need of help, and whatever else the issue of the day happens to be. The phone rings and a distressed voice on the end of the line is contemplating suicide. Or perhaps it's a victim of childhood sexual abuse relaying details of their awful experiences and seeking support for their mental health¹⁵⁴

One contributor to Dr Weinberg's survey suggested that Members' staff need "similar support to trained counsellors where we have access to outside resources to debrief for our own mental wellbeing".¹⁵⁵ We agree.

129. We recommend that the MST set up a new contract for additional mental health resilience support with priority access given to Members' staff dealing with difficult constituency cases. This service should also be extended to Members.

Representation of Members' staff

130. There are a number of trade unions which operate within Parliament. Some Members' staff are members of a union, and others are members of the staff association, MAPSA. A small number of staff give up their time (with the generous support of their Member) to work as representatives for these groups, supporting colleagues with workplace issues.

131. In addition, there are a number of staff who volunteer their time (again, at the discretion of their Member) to support initiatives that benefit Members' staff as a whole. This includes staff supporting the Wellness Working Group and the Work4MP website. Together with the trade unions and MAPSA these staff work to improve the working lives of Members' staff, and we have been grateful for their contributions to our work.

132. We note that this representative function, while hugely valued by staff, is subject to a degree of precarity. Should the members of staff involved move on, there is no guarantee that another Member would be willing to allow their staff to give up time to support these groups in continuing their work.

133. Given our wider conclusion that Members should continue to be the employers of their staff, there is no means by which these groups can be given formal recognition by the House, nor should they be. The MST works closely with each of these groups to provide them with a voice on issues that impact them and this arrangement works effectively. Nevertheless, it is important that this work be recognised, and established on a more sustainable basis.

134. We recommend that IPSA consult on suitable criteria to provide additional funding to a Member to backfill the work undertaken by their staff, where the member of staff is undertaking a role which benefits Members' staff as a whole.

Dealing with poor employment practices

135. While the focus of our report has been on increasing support for Members in being good employers, we are aware that this does not address the behaviour of those Members

¹⁵⁴ The Guardian, [‘We can’t switch off’: MP’s staff member reveals mental health pressure](#), 23 May 2022 [accessed 6 July 2023]

¹⁵⁵ Dr Ashley Weinberg, Follow up Survey of Members' staff, p. 44

who are persistently poor employers. There is currently no framework to support Members and their staff in resolving employment issues that fall outside the scope of the ICGS. As a result, there are no effective options for staff to resolve issues with Members who are poor employers, other than through an Employment Tribunal.

Employment practices insurance policy

136. Where a Member is the defendant in an employment tribunal, they are able to access an employment practices insurance policy to cover the costs of any action and any resulting judgment. The Scottish Parliament's Corporate Body applies some exclusions for their equivalent cover, requiring Members to seek and follow advice from HR when an employment issue arises, in order to access the insurance.¹⁵⁶

137. Given the expanded and more proactive support from the MST which we propose in this report, and the increased range of options for resolving issues before they reach tribunal, we think it is entirely reasonable to adopt a similar approach.

138. Access to the benefits of the employment practices insurance policy should only be available to Members who have sought HR advice from MST (or a qualified HR professional) at the earliest possible opportunity. We recommend that the House of Commons Commission should instruct the House Authorities to implement this policy.

A new approach to resolving employment issues

139. As set out in Chapter 2, Members' staff face a range of challenges in their working lives. These can relate to the pressures of the job, a lack of effective management, or a breakdown in relations with their employer or another colleague. It is clear from the evidence that Members' staff are hugely proud of the work that they do, and where problems arise, they would most value an outcome that allows them to continue in their role.¹⁵⁷

140. From a Member's perspective, where a challenge arises with a member of their staff, any resolution which involves the member of staff leaving their post creates additional challenges and pressure, both for the Member and their other staff, as they lose the skills and experience of the departing staff member and have to undertake what can be a time-intensive recruitment process while carrying a vacancy. The former Leader of the House, Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom, agreed that the conference should seek to establish a means of resolving issues between Members and staff while staff remained in employment.¹⁵⁸

141. Many of the solutions that have been proposed to us, such as moving to a central employer, or having a dedicated Members' staff HR service, have sought to address these challenges, but in our view, none provide an avenue for resolution which also seeks to repair and maintain working relationships.

142. Some contributors have called for a mediation service to help provide a form of resolution in such cases.¹⁵⁹ Mediation as a term in employment disputes is often part of the formal process of making a tribunal claim, allowing sides to reach a negotiated

¹⁵⁶ Visit to the Scottish Parliament January 2023

¹⁵⁷ Dr Ashley Weinberg, Survey of MP's Staff, p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ Rt Hon Dame Andrea Leadsom, Q134

¹⁵⁹ For example Sue Hynard ([SPC0006](#)), Shadow Leader of the House ([SPC0030](#)), Anonymous ([SPC0013](#))

settlement without having to go to tribunal. We wholeheartedly support the idea of resolving employment disputes in a way that can repair fractured working relationships, but a formal “mediation service” could be perceived to have the wrong focus.

143. In discussions with stakeholders we have heard about an alternative approach, known as “restorative practice” which has as its core aim finding resolutions that allow productive relationships to continue. The Restorative Justice Council describes it as follows:

Restorative practice can be used anywhere to prevent conflict, build relationships and repair harm by enabling people to communicate effectively and positively. Restorative practice is increasingly being used in schools, children’s services, workplaces, hospitals, communities and the criminal justice system.

...

Restorative practice supports people to recognise that all of their activities affect others and that people are responsible for their choices and actions and can be held accountable for them. It enables people to reflect on how they interact with each other and consider how best to prevent harm and conflict.¹⁶⁰

144. We by no means suggest that this approach will be suitable in every case, and indeed, this would be wholly unsuitable for cases raised through the ICGS which has its own clearly defined set of processes. However, both Members and their staff would benefit from support to resolve employment issues in a mutually satisfactory manner.

145. This new service would align with the more proactive mandate we have recommended for the MST, allowing issues to be resolved at an early stage, before relationships deteriorate to such an extent that repair is no longer possible. Members and their staff would be able to seek confidential support through the MST, who would contract in fully trained professional staff to deliver this service. ***We recommend that the MST establish a restorative practice service designed to provide confidential support for resolving employment issues with the intention of maintaining and repairing employment relations.***

160 See Restorative Justice Council, [What is Restorative Justice?](#) [accessed 3 July 2023]

6 IPSA: regulation and reform

146. Members of Parliament are independent office holders and employ their own staff. However, IPSA plays a significant role in and around the employment of Members staff - providing the template contracts, salary banding and the overall staffing budgets.¹⁶¹ Ian Todd, Chief Executive, IPSA, told us that “making sure those staff are sufficient in number, well looked after, remunerated and well treated throughout their employment with a Member is important to us”.¹⁶²

147. IPSA was “created rapidly” in 2009 in response to significant public concern about the way Members’ business costs and personal expenses were managed.¹⁶³ IPSA notes that the fallout from the events of that time was considerable and “had a deep impact on the reputation of MPs and our democracy more widely”.¹⁶⁴ Over a decade on, IPSA has achieved considerable success as an independent regulator, reporting high levels of compliance within the expenses regime. It also asserts that, “to a large extent frequent front page headlines about MP expenditure have gone away”.¹⁶⁵

148. While there is no doubt that IPSA has established itself as an effective and independent regulator of Members’ salaries and expenses, the understandable emphasis on its regulatory role has sometimes been to the detriment of the delivery of an efficient and user-friendly service to Members and their staff. The provision of services to Members and their staff under the IPSA Scheme, and the strained relationships between some Members and IPSA, still operate under the shadow of the expenses scandal. If we are to address the working arrangements and conditions for Members’ staff, we must consider elements of IPSA’s scheme and how it is administered, as this has direct consequences for the day to day working lives of Members and their staff. This is in no way intended to undermine the role of IPSA as a regulator. We are committed to effective, independent and transparent regulation of Members’ salaries and expenses.

Support for Members

149. As previously noted, the overall budget available to Members for the employment of staff has increased considerably in recent years - 25% over the past 3 years.¹⁶⁶ During the same period, many Members and their staff have reported an increase in workload, particularly in casework and engagement with constituents - a marked trend which began during the campaign on the Referendum on the UK’s departure from the EU, and which continued to increase during the Covid-19 pandemic.¹⁶⁷

150. The current staff budget is sufficient to allow Members to employ 5 and a half FTE staff. However, IPSA data shows that only 18 Members spent their full staffing budget in 2021–22.¹⁶⁸ In October 2021, the Cross Party Office Managers Group prepared a

161 Ian Todd Q 50

162 Q 50

163 IPSA, [Business Plan 2023/24](#), June 2023

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid.

166 Ian Todd Q59

167 IPSA, [Casework & return to office working survey: Headline Findings](#), 2021

168 There are several potential reasons for this underspend, for example, see paras 68–75 on unintended consequences, and paras 165–167 below which outline some of the complexities in navigating the system.

Staffing Review for IPSA, *One size does not fit all*.¹⁶⁹ It called for an increase in the overall budget to 6 FTE equivalent with the scope to pay all of them up to 100% of the salary band.¹⁷⁰ It is clear that in some offices, workload pressures are significant and there is an ongoing demand for more resources. It is also clear that in some offices the staff budget is underspent, whether because of lack of need, or because of the issues around perceptions as outlined in Chapter 4.

151. We currently have insufficient data on the scale of the workload faced by Members' staff, and therefore no proper grasp of whether the current levels of funding for Members' staff are appropriate and adequate to enable Members to fulfil their democratic duties to both Parliament and their constituents. Any discussion of the roles and remuneration of Members' staff must involve a discussion of the role and responsibilities of Members of Parliament and evaluation of the support they require. Members are independent office holders who, rightly, each choose and emphasise different elements of their role. This is right and is fundamental to how Parliamentary democracy operates in the UK. However, there is an overdue need to evaluate whether Members are being properly and adequately supported.

152. We encourage IPSA to undertake a study of the work of Members' offices, in order to establish a clearer picture of the demands placed on Members' staff.

153. Meanwhile, there is no doubt that an ever-increasing constituency caseload, for the majority of (though not all) Members puts undue pressure on Members' staff. IPSA currently makes provision for "contingency funding" due to "exceptional circumstances".¹⁷¹ However, IPSA's guidance is not explicit about what would be allowed under this scheme. Members may apply to IPSA for contingency funding, under the following circumstances:

- i) where they have incurred a cost, or liability for a cost, which is not covered by the Scheme, but which they consider to be in support of their parliamentary functions;
- ii) where their spending under a particular budget has exceeded or may exceed the budget limit for the year and they consider this to be the result of exceptional circumstances.¹⁷²

154. We ask IPSA to provide clear and accessible guidance on both the criteria for securing contingency funding and on the application process, and to include anonymised examples of cases where additional funding has been provided. We recommend that IPSA make the process for applying for contingency funding more straightforward and lower the threshold for qualification.

Member's staff: terms and conditions

Overtime

155. Many of the submissions and representation we received from Members' staff raised specific concerns around terms and conditions - particularly around unpaid overtime and

¹⁶⁹ Office Managers Group, *Staffing Review: One size doesn't fit all*

¹⁷⁰ Hive Support Ltd (SPC0022)

¹⁷¹ IPSA, [The Scheme of MPs Staffing and Business Costs 2023–24](#), Chapter 10, p 42

¹⁷² Ibid.

spine point progression. Ian Todd described unpaid overtime “one of the great unknowns”, as it is very difficult to quantify. He noted, however, that given that most Members’ staffing budgets are underspent there is scope to ensure at least some, if not all of that, can be paid.¹⁷³

156. The GMB noted that decisions around the payment of overtime should be formalised and consistent “rather than left to the discretion of the MP”.¹⁷⁴ ***We agree that Members’ staff should not be working unpaid overtime and recommend that IPSA work with Member’s offices (supported by the MST) to provide clear guidance about the acceptable parameters for overtime and adequate payment.***

Pay Progression

157. The GMB also stated that Members’ staff should have clear pay progression, which “like any other staff (for example House of Commons Staff)” they “would be entitled to in line with objective criteria”.¹⁷⁵ However, in 2014 the High Court ruled that House employees had no legal right to pay automatic progression after the end of the 2008–2010 pay agreement. Contractual pay progression has also been abolished in the Civil Service. The House aspires to allow people to progress within pay ranges (subject to satisfactory performance) but the extent to which it can be achieved is determined by affordability of the pay budget and is subject to pay negotiations. Ian Todd noted “the idea that in any employment somebody will continue indefinitely to get an above annual increment pay rise due to length of service just does not exist as “it would be out of kilter with any other employment”.¹⁷⁶ We agree.

158. Last year, IPSA completed its triennial salary benchmarking exercise to ensure that Members’ staff salary ranges are in line with comparable roles in other sectors. This resulted in some increased salary bands and a commitment to ensuring that all roles meet the Voluntary Living Wage. IPSA is currently undertaking the next phase of its work to review Members’ staffing matters which includes “assessing career and pay progression, equality, regional pay including the existing London salary weighting, flexible working, living pensions, job descriptions and bandings as well as further salary benchmarking”.¹⁷⁷

159. ***We recognise the legitimate concerns raised by Members’ staff in relation to their terms and conditions. IPSA is currently undertaking a review of staffing matters. We recommend that IPSA takes note of the evidence submitted to the Conference and works closely with Members’ staff to ensure its Scheme reflects the realities of their working lives and provides adequate and appropriate payment.***

Continuity of service

160. Members’ staff who work for more than one Member during the course of their career are not currently entitled to have their employment with other Members taken into

173 Q66 and Q70. In 2021-22 the overall staffing budget was in the region of £133 million. The total amount spent was around £111 million, so there was a £20 million shortfall, albeit divided by 650 offices.

174 GMB ([SPC0016](#))

175 GMB ([SPC0016](#)). See also [Thorne & Ors v House of Commons Commission \[2014\] EWHC 93 \(QB\) \(29 January 2014\)](#) ([bailii.org](#))

176 Q90

177 IPSA, [Business Plan 2023/24](#), June 2023, p 6

account when calculating redundancy or leave entitlements. In this sense, Members' staff do not enjoy the benefits of 'continuity of service' and potentially lose out on entitlements such as non-statutory maternity pay.

Box 3: Case studies from Charlotte Nicholls MP

One of my staff gave birth shortly after I employed her. Because she had not worked for me for 26 weeks she was not entitled to statutory maternity pay. This was despite her having worked for another MP for over a decade until the 2019 election, and receiving payment from IPSA unbroken from working for that MP to working for me. I found it appalling both that she was denied this entitlement, and that as her supposed employer I could not take the decision to award it to her regardless.¹⁷⁸

Ms Nicholls noted another case of a long-term member of staff switching to work for another MP and then soon discovering that they had a very serious medical situation. She explained "they were not deemed to have built up enough continuous employment to qualify for paid sick leave despite having worked at the same location in the same role for years".¹⁷⁹

161. We discussed with IPSA how such anomalies might be addressed within its existing scheme, and we welcome their willingness to engage and think creatively about these issues.¹⁸⁰

162. *We recommend that IPSA amend its Scheme to recognise previous service with another Member when calculating entitlements to redundancy or leave. It is acknowledged that an individual's eligibility for statutory entitlements, such as redundancy pay and family related leave and pay, are intrinsically linked to continuous service and are therefore not available to staff whose continuity of service is brought to an end by virtue of a change of Member.*

163. *We recommend that IPSA consider providing contractual entitlements for both pay and leave, equivalent to the statutory schemes of redundancy, maternity, adoption, paternity and shared parental leave. Eligibility for such contractual entitlements should be calculated with reference to all concurrent periods of employment an individual has held with any Members. This would require amendment to the IPSA Scheme and their approval of templates for contracts.*

164. *We further recommend that IPSA investigate options for creating a scheme, comparable to the Civil Service Benevolent Fund, to support Members' staff who are unable to work due to ill-health.*

Streamlined services

The user experience

165. A prevalent theme of the evidence we have received from both Members and their staff has been widespread frustration with access and usability of IPSA services. Perceived

¹⁷⁸ Charlotte Nicholls MP

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ian Todd Q100

inefficiencies and poor levels of customer service by IPSA create a significant level of time and emotional pressure on both staff and Members, though principally affecting Members' staff who spend a substantial amount of time dealing with IPSA.¹⁸¹

166. Ian Todd noted that when the current system was implemented in 2019, it was intended to enable IPSA to manage a consolidated £250 million spend across all Members' offices. He noted that "sufficient consideration was not given to how it would be used by MPs in their offices". He acknowledged "650 notionally small businesses are not going to use the same kind of system that one organisation managing £250 million is going to use" and that it was "not a simple enough system" which "takes up too much staff time".¹⁸²

167. During recent years IPSA claims to have made significant improvements in its services and is currently developing a new IPSA portal as an online channel "through which we deliver our service" - thereby reducing the need for Members and their staff to interact with IPSA online.¹⁸³ The portal will be designed to "allow easy access to budget views, spend against allowances, job description and contract tools and open cases".¹⁸⁴

168. *We welcome the development of the IPSA portal, but in order for it to be successful, IPSA must engage with both Members and their staff to design a system which is intuitive, user friendly and meets the real, rather than perceived, needs of Members and their staff. We have identified a number of simple changes which would immediately improve the user experience as follows:*

- i) IPSA should allow Members to nominate two proxies (rather than one) to enable Westminster and constituency staff to deal with relevant matters.***
- ii) The portal should include a user-friendly tool to allow Members to visualise the on-costs associated with staff salaries, rather than having to calculate this manually.***
- iii) The portal should include real time and up to date data as to how much of the budget has been allocated/spent for the financial year.***
- iv) IPSA should endeavour to confirm budgets for the upcoming financial year as far in advance as possible.***

169. This list is not exhaustive. We recommend that IPSA set up a joint user group with Members and their staff on improving customer service. The group should input into the design a portal which is fit for purpose - and meets the needs of Members in fulfilling their duties as an employer, as well as in their duties in Parliament and the constituency.

170. While improving the online user interface is an important step, it is insufficient to address the frustration and mistrust between some Members and IPSA. We therefore recommend that IPSA:

- i) allocate a named account manager to each Member, and***

¹⁸¹ Shadow Leader of the House ([SPC0030](#))

¹⁸² Q 56

¹⁸³ IPSA, [Business Plan 2023/24](#), June 2023, p 11

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*.

ii) establishes a permanent presence on the Parliamentary estate to enable Members and their staff to access support and resolve queries.

The Provision of centralised services

171. In its Business plan for 2023–24, IPSA notes its ambition to “reduce the financial and administrative burden on MPs and their staff” and to “achieve better value for money”, by moving to the provision of centralised goods and services. It notes that “this would give MPs discretion where they need it, allow MPs to access quality goods and services without the need for them to shop around, still buy local where appropriate and remove the strain of administering their business costs”. IPSA is currently developing two proof of concept pilots for the provision of central services:

- i) the purchasing of office supplies through a direct supplier (and testing alternative models to reimbursement).
- ii) property management support and utilities and services linked to property management support.¹⁸⁵

172. We welcome the work IPSA is undertaking to increase the provision of centralised services - both to reduce the administrative burden on Members’ and their staff, and to provide value for money through economies of scale.

Constituency offices

173. At the moment, in addition to being allocated office space on the Parliamentary Estate, provision is also made via IPSA for Members to rent office space or suitable accommodation in their constituency. The work currently being undertaken on property management presents an opportunity to push for improved standards in constituency offices and make real improvements in the physical working environment of constituency staff.

- i) The varied quality of office accommodation means that some Members’ staff are working in environments that have an adverse impact on physical and mental health.
- ii) Newly elected Members are unlikely to be property experts and would benefit from additional support from the House Service in seeking suitable accommodation that represents good value for money.
- iii) Arrangements whereby Members rent offices from local political parties (or other ad hoc arrangements) represent a reputational risk to Parliament as they may be seen as an unreasonable enrichment of the incumbent party by the taxpayer.
- iv) A centralised approach to the provision of constituency office accommodation may present opportunities to save public money, as well as ensure the provision of adequate and safe office accommodation.

¹⁸⁵ IPSA, [Business Plan 2023/24](#), June 2023, p 11

174. There are a number of models by which this could be achieved. For example, In Australia, Members ‘electorate’ (constituency) offices are provided by the executive,¹⁸⁶ and “in the interest of value for money” Members will usually be allocated the office accommodation of their predecessor. In addition to providing value for money, this also helps to promote consistency of standards and facilities across all offices and encourages longer term investment in both digital and security resources.¹⁸⁷

175. The House Service should establish a joint Working Group with IPSA to consider how the provision of office accommodation could most effectively be centralised, to ensure value for money, a good standard of accommodation and a minimum level of security provision for all Members’ offices, thus improving the working environments of Members’ staff.

Separation of IPSA’s regulatory and administrative functions

176. As we have set out throughout this report, IPSA is the regulator of Members’ spending as well as the provider of key services to both Members’ and their staff. This puts IPSA in a difficult position of seeking to protect and assert their independence as a regulator of Members’ spending, while at the same time providing key services to those Members who are their clients. This is not sustainable. IPSA are right to fiercely guard their independence as the regulator of Members’ salaries and expenses. Members and their staff are right to expect high levels of service and support in the employment arrangements for their staff, and to be extensively engaged in policy decisions which have a direct impact on them and their staff. Marcial Boo, former Chief Executive, IPSA, stated that being both a regulator and service provider “creates conflicts in incentives, and risks IPSA doing both roles sub-optimally”.¹⁸⁸ We agree.

177. We encourage IPSA to think differently about its roles as a regulator and a provider of support services, so that staff working in a customer service role have a culture focused on supporting Members in delivering their constituency and Parliamentary functions, rather than acting as a barrier to efficient delivery of services. This could be achieved via an internal re-organisation of how IPSA manages its business and no changes to legislation would be required.

¹⁸⁶ Australian Government Department of Finance, [Office types and office resources](#), [accessed 30 June 2023]

¹⁸⁷ More detail can be found here: Australian Government Department of Finance, [Office types and office resources](#), [accessed 30 June 2023]

¹⁸⁸ Marcial Boo ([SPC0025](#))

Conclusions and recommendations

Exploring solutions

1. Contractual change is a costly and time-consuming exercise - and is ultimately a blunt instrument. (Paragraph 47)
2. We are not persuaded that the problems we have identified and the issues and challenges which have been explored by the Conference will be adequately addressed by a change in the employer. The nature of the work of an MP, and the close working arrangements and personal loyalty between Members and their staff mean that Members should continue to be the employers of their staff. (Paragraph 49)

Community, culture and behaviour

3. While we recognise that the House Administration is not the employer of Members' staff, it has a responsibility to drive cultural change in Parliament; to recognise the contribution of Members' staff; and to make them feel part of the wider Parliamentary community. We welcome the approach set out in the Corporate Business Plan and we have identified some specific changes which would help set the tone for the organisation in valuing the contribution of Members' staff and creating a more inclusive culture. (Paragraph 55)
4. *We recommend that the House Administration reset its approach to providing support services to Members' staff, to provide such services by default unless there are legal, financial or practical barriers to providing services that cannot reasonably be overcome.* (Paragraph 57)
5. *We welcome the recent creation of a new role of Director of Members' Staff Engagement as a clear commitment on the part of the House Administration to improve services and support for Members' staff. We recommend that the Director work closely with the House Administration to monitor progress in the integration of staff into the Parliamentary community and the extension of the delivery of House services to Members' staff.* (Paragraph 58)
6. Given our overall conclusion that Members should remain the employers of their staff, we do not suggest that the House Administration take formal responsibility for the wellbeing of Members' staff - this rightly remains with individual Members. (Paragraph 62)
7. *In line with our core principle about access to support services, we recommend that the House Administration expand the remit of the Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service, and the role of the Workplace Adjustments Case Manager, to offer services to Members' staff on an equivalent basis to Members and House staff. This could be achieved by offering such services for a fee, paid for by Members using their allowance with IPSA.* (Paragraph 63)
8. *Access to the on-site flu vaccination clinic or vouchers should be open to Members' staff on the same basis as Members and House staff. Vouchers would be particularly useful in allowing constituency staff to access similar services locally.* (Paragraph 64)

9. *We recommend that the House of Commons Commission task the Cultural Transformation team with proactively engaging with Members and their staff to provide guidance on best practice to Members.* (Paragraph 67)
10. As well as supporting Members in conducting their Parliamentary functions, Members' staff play a key role in directly supporting constituents, with many Members' offices acting as the last resort for people facing serious hardship or injustice who have exhausted other avenues for support. It demeans and devalues the hard work that staff of all political persuasions do to support both the functioning of Parliament and the communities their Member represents to present their salaries as Members' own expenses. (Paragraph 71)
11. *We recommend that, to minimise the risk of misinterpretation, IPSA publish information on staff salaries and office accommodation costs separately from Members' own salaries and expenses, making clear that the funding is part of the support provided for Members to conduct Parliamentary work and that this provides an important public benefit.* (Paragraph 72)
12. Members' staff need to travel to Westminster as part of their work, and they are entitled to seek continuous professional development. While oversight of public spending is important, it should not, as an unintended consequence or otherwise, result in unfair treatment of staff. (Paragraph 74)
13. *We recommend that the IPSA budget for Members' staff travel and training be reported on as a whole rather than on a per-Member basis (for example, in the way security costs are aggregated when published).* (Paragraph 75)
14. *Subject to passing the necessary security checks, we recommend that all staff employed by Members be given a Parliamentary network account to allow them to access the online Parliamentary community.* (Paragraph 78)
15. *We recommend that the House Administration provide guidance on best practice to Members on ensuring that safeguarding policies are used effectively within their offices.* (Paragraph 79)
16. *We urge colleagues to respond positively to the changes proposed by this report, and to have an honest dialogue with their staff about whether they themselves can drive positive change, in the knowledge that the Members' Services Team will provide its valuable support to any Member who wishes to improve the working lives of their staff.* (Paragraph 81)

HR support for Members and their staff

17. In only three years, the MST has succeeded in establishing trusted and effective working relationships with both Members and their staff, based on the efficient and effective delivery of key HR services of value to Members and their staff. (Paragraph 90)

18. *We recommend that the recently created role of Director of Members' Staff Engagement be formally located within the MST to provide oversight of the delivery and implementation of the enhanced provision for Members' staff as set out in this report. (Paragraph 91)*
19. *We further recommend that the Members' Services Team be re-named the Members' and Members' Staff Services Team (MMSST) in order to more accurately reflect its work and the new and enhanced provision for Members' staff recommended in this report. (Paragraph 92)*
20. *The MST has proved the value of a hands on and customer-led approach to supporting Members and their staff. We recommend that the team be expanded with the addition of 6 FTE HR staff, to enable the team to manage the increasing demands on existing services and to expand the range of services on offer. (Paragraph 94)*
21. *The Members' Services Team is not explicitly empowered to proactively engage with Members' and their offices where problems are identified, as this was not part of their remit when set up by the Commission in 2020. We recommend that the Commission give a clear direction to the MST that it has the authority to proactively engage with Members. (Paragraph 96)*
22. *We recommend that the House Administration and IPSA amend their data sharing agreement to provide for IPSA to share data (in real time where possible) on new starters, leavers and sickness absence with the MST. (Paragraph 98)*
23. *We recommend that the MST establish a system of dedicated Customer Account Managers, to enable them to be more proactive in supporting Members to deliver professional HR standards and best practice within their offices. (Paragraph 102)*
24. *New Members face particular challenges in the first few weeks with a lack of staff support. This can incentivise hiring people quickly rather than identifying the best people for a role. (Paragraph 111)*
25. *The new Member induction process, overseen by the House Administration's General Election Planning Group, provides welcome support to new Members. Nevertheless, it is important to give greater prominence to advice and support on recruitment and employment practices. We recommend that specific events for new Members on recruitment and employment responsibilities take place in the House of Commons Chamber in the first few days of a Parliament, to underline the importance of these events and the value of the advice on offer. (Paragraph 112)*
26. *The party Whips welcome the idea of providing more time for support and training for new Members at the start of a Parliament. Even delaying the start of formal business by two or three days, or by carving out time in the first few days of formal business for training and support sessions, would have a substantial impact on the experience of new Members. (Paragraph 113)*
27. *We urge all political parties to recognise that this approach has wide-spread cross-party support and make this part of the planning assumption in the first weeks of a new Parliament. (Paragraph 114)*

28. We welcome the work being undertaken by the Director of Member Engagement to provide clear advice to prospective candidates, through political parties, about their responsibilities as employers and managers. (Paragraph 115)
29. *We recommend that the Members' Services Team work with political parties to build up a bank of examples of effective office structures. The best practice guides which the MST already publish provide a model for the way in which such advice could be distributed.* (Paragraph 118)
30. *We support the fundamental principle that Members' staff should have access to guidance provided by HR qualified professionals. We recommend that the MST budget be expanded to provide for 4 FTE professionally qualified HR staff to deliver this new service to Members' staff.* (Paragraph 125)
31. *We recommend that the MST set up a new contract for additional mental health resilience support with priority access given to Members' staff dealing with difficult constituency cases. This service should also be extended to Members.* (Paragraph 129)
32. *We recommend that IPSA consult on suitable criteria to provide additional funding to a Member to backfill the work undertaken by their staff, where the member of staff is undertaking a role which benefits Members' staff as a whole.* (Paragraph 134)
33. Access to the benefits of the employment practices insurance policy should only be available to Members who have sought HR advice from MST (or a qualified HR professional) at the earliest possible opportunity. *We recommend that the House of Commons Commission should instruct the House Authorities to implement this policy.* (Paragraph 138)
34. *We recommend that the MST establish a restorative practice service designed to provide confidential support for resolving employment issues with the intention of maintaining and repairing employment relations.* (Paragraph 145)

IPSA: regulation and reform

35. We currently have insufficient data on the scale of the workload faced by Members' staff, and therefore no proper grasp of whether the current levels of funding for Members' staff are appropriate and adequate to enable Members to fulfil their democratic duties to both Parliament and their constituents. Any discussion of the roles and remuneration of Members' staff must involve a discussion of the role and responsibilities of Members of Parliament and evaluation of the support they require. Members are independent office holders who, rightly, each choose and emphasise different elements of their role. This is right and is fundamental to how Parliamentary democracy operates in the UK. However, there is an overdue need to evaluate whether Members are being properly and adequately supported. (Paragraph 151)
36. *We encourage IPSA to undertake a study of the work of Members' offices, in order to establish a clearer picture of the demands placed on Members' staff.* (Paragraph 152)
37. *We ask IPSA to provide clear and accessible guidance on both the criteria for securing contingency funding and on the application process, and to include anonymised*

examples of cases where additional funding has been provided. We recommend that IPSA make the process for applying for contingency funding more straightforward and lower the threshold for qualification. (Paragraph 154)

38. *We agree that Members' staff should not be working unpaid overtime and recommend that IPSA work with Member's offices (supported by the MST) to provide clear guidance about the acceptable parameters for overtime and adequate payment. (Paragraph 156)*
39. *We recognise the legitimate concerns raised by Members' staff in relation to their terms and conditions. IPSA is currently undertaking a review of staffing matters. We recommend that IPSA takes note of the evidence submitted to the Conference and works closely with Members' staff to ensure its Scheme reflects the realities of their working lives and provides adequate and appropriate payment. (Paragraph 159)*
40. *We recommend that IPSA amend its Scheme to recognise previous service with another Member when calculating entitlements to redundancy or leave. It is acknowledged that an individual's eligibility for statutory entitlements, such as redundancy pay and family related leave and pay, are intrinsically linked to continuous service and are therefore not available to staff whose continuity of service is brought to an end by virtue of a change of Member. (Paragraph 162)*
41. *We recommend that IPSA consider providing contractual entitlements for both pay and leave, equivalent to the statutory schemes of redundancy, maternity, adoption, paternity and shared parental leave. Eligibility for such contractual entitlements should be calculated with reference to all concurrent periods of employment an individual has held with any Members. This would require amendment to the IPSA Scheme and their approval of templates for contracts. (Paragraph 163)*
42. *We further recommend that IPSA investigate options for creating a scheme, comparable to the Civil Service Benevolent Fund, to support Members' staff who are unable to work due to ill-health. (Paragraph 164)*
43. *We welcome the development of the IPSA portal, but in order for it to be successful, IPSA must engage with both Members and their staff to design a system which is intuitive, user friendly and meets the real, rather than perceived, needs of Members and their staff. We have identified a number of simple changes which would immediately improve the user experience as follows:*
 - i) IPSA should allow Members to nominate two proxies (rather than one) to enable Westminster and constituency staff to deal with relevant matters.*
 - ii) The portal should include a user-friendly tool to allow Members to visualise the on-costs associated with staff salaries, rather than having to calculate this manually.*
 - iii) The portal should include real time and up to date data as to how much of the budget has been allocated/spent for the financial year.*
 - iv) IPSA should endeavour to confirm budgets for the upcoming financial year as far in advance as possible. (Paragraph 168)*

44. *This list is not exhaustive. We recommend that IPSA set up a joint user group with Members and their staff on improving customer service. The group should input into the design a portal which is fit for purpose - and meets the needs of Members in fulfilling their duties as an employer, as well as in their duties in Parliament and the constituency. (Paragraph 169)*
45. *While improving the online user interface is an important step, it is insufficient to address the frustration and mistrust between some Members and IPSA. We therefore recommend that IPSA:*
 - i) allocate a named account manager to each Member and*
 - ii) establishes a permanent presence on the Parliamentary estate to enable Members and their staff to access support and resolve queries. (Paragraph 170)*
46. *We welcome the work IPSA is undertaking to increase the provision of centralised services - both to reduce the administrative burden on Members' and their staff, and to provide value for money through economies of scale. (Paragraph 172)*
47. *The House Service should establish a joint Working Group with IPSA to consider how the provision of office accommodation could most effectively be centralised, to ensure value for money, a good standard of accommodation and a minimum level of security provision for all Members' offices, thus improving the working environments of Members' staff. (Paragraph 175)*
48. *We encourage IPSA to think differently about its roles as a regulator and a provider of support services, so that staff working in a customer service role have a culture focused on supporting Members in delivering their constituency and Parliamentary functions, rather than acting as a barrier to efficient delivery of services. This could be achieved via an internal re-organisation of how IPSA manages its business and no changes to legislation would be required. (Paragraph 177)*

Annex 1: Members' Services Team

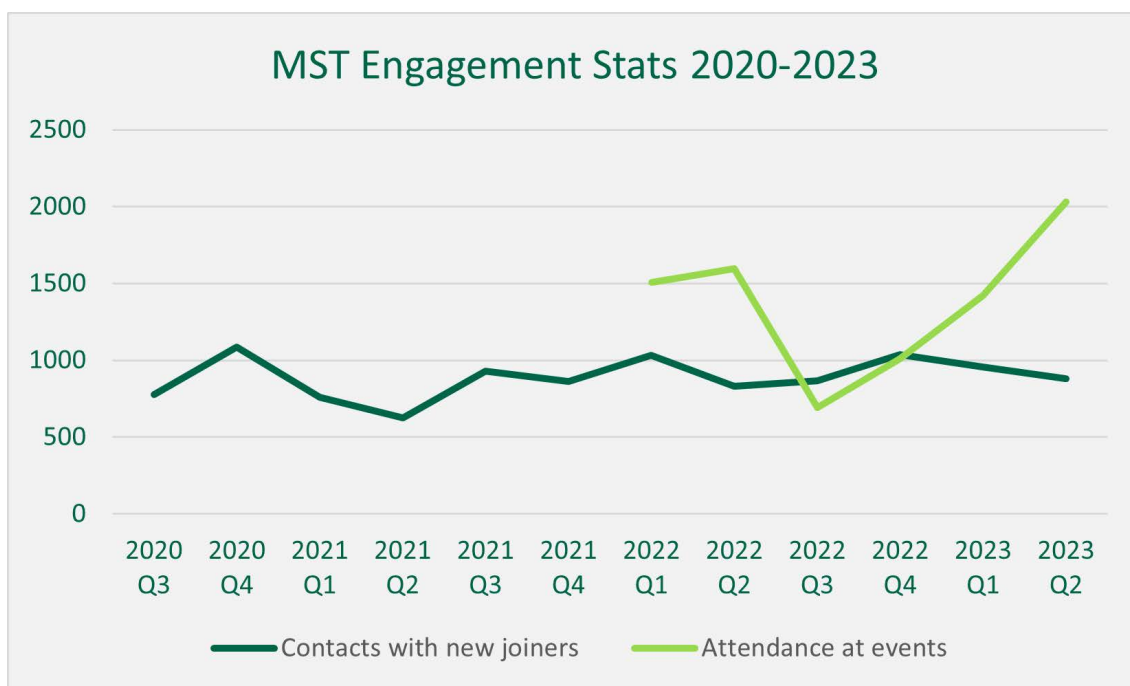
1. The MST delivers events, contacts, signposting to key services and offering pastoral care, as well as regional constituency events, as well as sessions such as the weekly Members' Office Management phone-in and a regular Members' staff working group, that ensures that customer views are taken into account when developing services. The team also collaborates with other House teams, running the House-wide Community of Engagers, and for example working with the Library to deliver a casework forum. The Team also oversees the regular House Services Fair, which has been successfully run on three occasions to date. Other services include:

- early contact with all new starters when their outlook account is set up, including an invitation to a monthly new joiner welcome and networking event and job-related guides.
- a regular all-Members' Staff phone-in on topics relevant to Members' staff (previous subjects have included dealing with suicidal constituents, constituents with hoarding disorder, the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, and Restoration and Renewal), and regular communications about House services and events.
- weekly phone-ins for those staff managing Members' offices, virtual drop-in sessions, the Office Manager training course and fortnightly regional constituency events, and participate in the Members' staff induction programme.
- an HR service for Members and their proxies which is delivered by the Members' HR Advice Service.
- a range of best practice employment guides for Members, which are supported by regular employment workshops.
- research into Member and Members' staff engagement and interaction with House services.
- facilitating a schedule of learning and development activities for Members and Members' staff.
- A programme of regional events and constituency office visits to connect with Members' offices around the country.

Engagement statistics

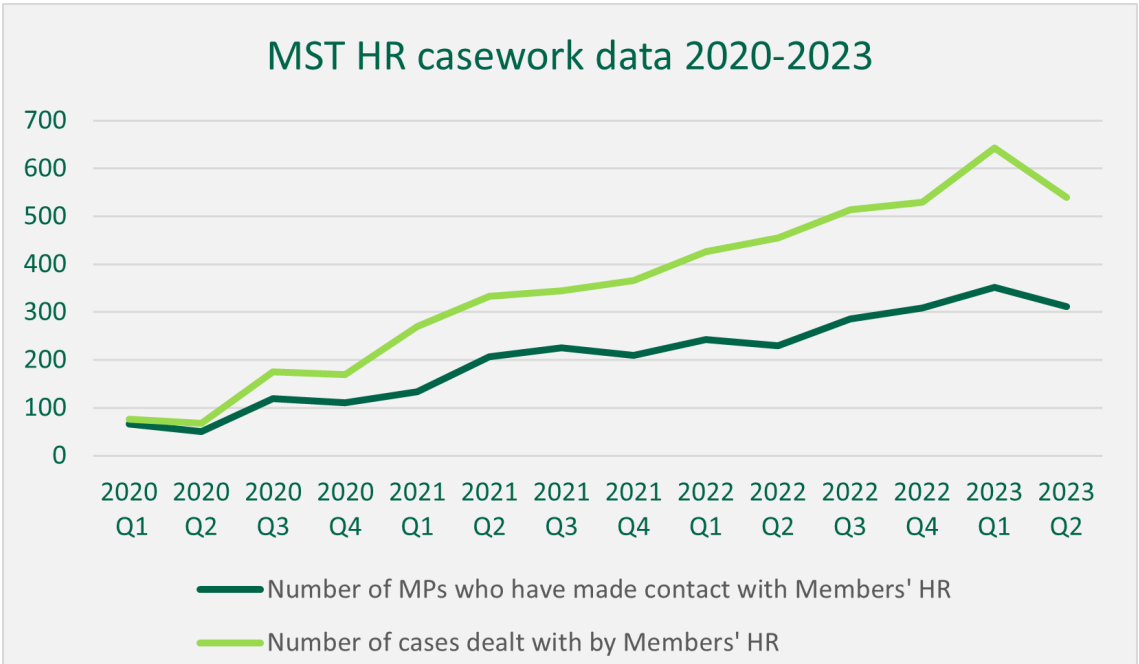
Engagement	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q3	2023 Q1	2023 Q2
Members Staff Support Officers welcome emails			333	337	259	207	329	290	338	302	287	346	324	270
Calls made to new joiners			114	360	260	222	236	314	356	254	294	377	322	334
Induction Emails			332	350	241	197	363	256	338	276	287	315	310	277

Engagement	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q3	2023 Q1	2023 Q2
Events organised									23	20	19	20	26	29
Attendance at events									1506	1595	690	1009	1421	2031



HR statistics

HR Services	2020 Q1	2020 Q2	2020 Q3	2020 Q4	2021 Q1	2021 Q2	2021 Q3	2021 Q4	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q3	2023 Q1	2023 Q2
Number of MPs who have made contact with Members' HR	66	51	119	111	133	207	226	209	242	230	285	308	351	311
Number of cases dealt with by Members' HR	76	67	175	169	270	333	344	366	426	455	514	530	643	539
Number of Office Manager who attended OM workshop				47	38	14	18	5	6	11	16	6	24	5



Annex 2: Recommendations ownership grid

Recommendation	Owner	Paragraph ref
Extension of House Administration support services to Members' staff	Commons Executive Board (CEB)	57
Monitor progress of delivery of extension of support services	Director of Members' Staff Engagement	58
Extend Parliamentary Health and Wellbeing Service to Members' staff	CEB	63
Expansion of flu jab provision	CEB	64
Expand remit of Cultural Transformation Team	House of Commons Commission	67
Change publication arrangements for Members' staff costs	IPSA	72
Report on Members' staff travel and development budgets centrally	IPSA	75
All Members' staff employed via IPSA to be given a Parliamentary Network Account	Parliamentary Digital Service	78
Guidance on best practice on safeguarding	CEB	79
Locate role of Director of Members' staff engagement within the MMSST	CEB	91
Rename MST Members' and Members' Staff Services Team	CEB	92
Expand MMSST with 6 FTE HR staff	CEB	94
MMSST to have explicit mandate for proactive engagement	House of Commons Commission	96
Amend IPSA/House Service data sharing agreement	IPSA/CEB	98
MMSST to establish account manager system	MMSST	102
New Member induction events on employment responsibilities to take place in the House of Commons Chamber	General Election Planning Group	112
Manage the timing of formal business following an election to allow more time for training	Party Whips	114
Provide examples of effective office structures	MMSST	118
Expand MMSST with 4 Members' staff support officers	CEB	125
Establish a new contract for enhanced mental health support for Members' staff and Members	CEB	129
Establish criteria for backfill payments where Members' staff provide a beneficial service to Members' staff as a group	IPSA	134
Make consultation with MMSST a condition for coverage under employment practices insurance policy	House of Commons Commission	138

Establish a restorative practice service	CEB	145
Undertake a study of the work of Members' offices to establish demands on Members' staff	IPSA	152
Establish clear criteria and guidance for securing contingency funding	IPSA	154
Establish clear guidance on acceptable parameters for overtime and adequate payment	IPSA	156
IPSA to consider the issues highlighted by the conference in its ongoing staff review.	IPSA	159
Establish equivalent benefits for "continuity of service" for staff who move between Members	IPSA	162–163
Establish an equivalent of the Civil Service Benevolent Fund for Members' staff	IPSA	164
Improvements to the IPSA portal	IPSA	168
Establish a user group with Members to identify further portal improvements	IPSA	169
Establish named account managers and have a permanent presence on the Parliamentary Estate	IPSA	170
Establish joint working group to look at provision of constituency office accommodation	IPSA/CEB	175
Consider the balance between the regulatory and delivery functions of IPSA and create a culture focussed on supporting Members and their staff	IPSA	177

Appendix: Key Conclusions from Gemma White KC's Report on the Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff¹

The Inquiry's key conclusions are as follows:

- Some staff of Members of Parliament are subject to an unacceptable risk of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, at work. Most Members of Parliament treat their staff with dignity and respect but the problem of bullying and harassment is sufficiently widespread to require an urgent collective response.
- Recent steps taken by the House of Commons to address bullying and harassment across the Parliamentary community do not engage sufficiently with the particular issues faced by Members' staff, who are in a uniquely vulnerable position because they are directly employed by Members of Parliament. Many describe the idea of complaining about bullying and harassment under the new complaints procedure as "career suicide". They also often have strong party and personal loyalties which constitute significant barriers to complaint.
- To date, the group of MPs' staff who would be most likely to bring a complaint under the new Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, namely former staff of MPs, have been denied the right to do so. This limitation must be removed so that they have the opportunity to hold MPs to account. They must also be permitted to complain about events which took place before June 2017 (the current cut-off date) as recommended by Dame Laura Cox.
- Since few staff will complain in any event, other methods of tackling workplace bullying and harassment must be employed. Voluntary training is not the answer: only 34 out of 650 MPs and 135 out of 3200 MPs' staff have attended or booked onto the Valuing Everyone training designed to support the new Behaviour Code introduced in July 2018.
- There must be a fundamental shift away from regarding Members of Parliament as "650 small businesses" with near complete freedom to operate in relation to their staff. Members of Parliament must be required to adopt and follow employment practices and procedures which are aligned with those followed in other public sector workplaces.
- This shift must be supported by a properly resourced and staffed department within the House of Commons. It should develop and implement a coherent and robust approach to Members' employment practice and provide support to Members and their staff. Any necessary enforcement mechanisms (such as imposing conditions related to good employment practice on MPs' entitlement to staffing expenditure) should be considered by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority in conjunction with the new department.

¹ Gemma White KC, [*Bullying and Harassment of MPs' Parliamentary Staff- Independent Inquiry Report*](#), 19 July 2019, HC 2206, 2017-19

Formal minutes

Monday 17 July 2023

Members present¹

Mr Speaker, in the Chair

Wendy Chamberlain

Tracey Crouch

Clive Efford

Florence Eshalomi

Laura Farris

Marion Fellows

Andrew Jones

Dame Maria Miller

Wendy Morton

Speaker's Conference on the employment conditions of Members' staff

Draft Report (*Speaker's Conference on the employment conditions of Members' staff*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Paragraphs 1 to 177 read and agreed to.

Annexes and Summary agreed to.

Appendix agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available (Standing Order No. 134).

¹ Mary Robinson MP observed virtually

List of interlocutors

19 October 2022

- Jenny Symmons, GMB
- Georgina Kester-Harrison, MAPSA
- Max Freedman, Unite
- Tom Fairweather, Wellness Working Group

22 October 2022

- Chris Sear Director, Members' Services Team
- Dr John Benger, Clerk of the House of Commons

15 November 2022

- Ian Todd, Chief Executive, IPSA
- Lee Bridges, Director of Policy and Engagement, IPSA

30 November 2022

- Jo Willows, Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme Director
- Rt Hon. Dame Andrea Leadsom MP DBE

7 December 2022

- Rt Hon. Marcus Jones MP, Deputy Chief Whip, Conservative Party
- Rt Hon. Mark Tami MP, Accommodation and Pairing Whip, Labour Party
- Owen Thompson MP, Chief Whip, SNP

11 January 2023

- Tony Lee, Director of Campaigns, Conservative Party
- Hana Al-Izzi, PLP Advisor, Labour Party
- Dave McCobb, Director of Campaigns, Liberal Democrats

25 January 2023

- Kim McGrath, Head of Members' HR
- Reg Perry, Head of Employee Relations

31 January 2023

- Dr Ashley Weinberg, Senior Lecturer in Psychology, University of Salford

- Estelle Warhurst, Wellness Working Group
- Tom Fairweather, Wellness Working Group

8 February 2023

- Sarah Petit, Cultural Transformation Director
- Emilie-Louise Purdie, Director of Research, SNP
- Polly Roberts, Policy Research Unit, Conservative Party
- Matt Smith, Parliamentary Support Unit, Liberal Democrats
- Dan Whittle, Parliamentary Research Unit, Labour Party

1 March 2023

- Ted Barry, Deputy Director (People Security), Parliamentary Security Department
- Daniel Crutchfield, Head of Customer Experience Management, Parliamentary Digital Service
- Jo Oakley, Head of Members' Security Support Service, Parliamentary Security Department
- Anne-Marie Renny, MRICS, Deputy Head of Property Portfolio, Strategic Estates
- Helen Spall, Assistant Director, In House Services and Estates.

22 March 2023

- Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt MP, Leader of the House
- Rt Hon. Thangam Debbonaire MP, Shadow Leader of the House

Published written evidence

The following written evidence was received and can be viewed on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

SPC numbers are generated by the evidence processing system and so may not be complete

Administration Committee ([SPC0033](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0008](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0009](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0010](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0011](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0012](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0013](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0018](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0031](#))

Anonymous ([SPC0032](#))

Carolyn Hughes ([SPC0005](#))

Chartered Management Institute ([SPC0021](#))

Compassion in Politics ([SPC0023](#))

Charlotte Nichols MP ([SPC0028](#))

Dr Lisa Cameron MP ([SPC0034](#))

GMB Union ([SPC0016](#))

Hive Support Ltd ([SPC0022](#))

Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) ([SPC0014](#))

Isaac Wright ([SPC0036](#))

Kate Green MP ([SPC0029](#))

Katherine Hopkins ([SPC0007](#))

Marcial Boo ([SPC0025](#))

Max Darby ([SPC0004](#))

Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards ([SPC0041](#))

Parliamentary Research Service ([SPC0026](#))

Parliamentary Research Service ([SPC0035](#))

Parligenger ([SPC0027](#))

Peter Gibson MP ([SPC0017](#))

Policy Research Unit Limited ([SPC0020](#))

Rt Hon. Dame Andrea Leadsom MP ([SPC0002](#))

Rt Hon. Desmond Swayne MP ([SPC0001](#))

Rt Hon. Thangam Debbonaire MP ([SPC0030](#))

Sarah Coleby ([SPC0003](#))

Sense about Science ([SPC0024](#))

Sue Hynard ([SPC0006](#))

Unite Union ([SPC0015](#))

Wellness Working Group ([SPC0040](#))

List of Reports from the Speaker's Conference during the current Parliament

All publications from the Committee are available on the [publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

Session 2022–23

Number	Title	Reference
1st	Speaker's Conference on the employment conditions of Members' staff	HC 692