

# Market review of MPs' staff pay and recommendations for 2023-24

April 2023



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# Market review of MPs' staff pay and recommendations for 2023-24

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1. IPSA provides funding to MPs so that they can employ staff to support them in carrying out their parliamentary work. In providing a staffing budget to MPs, one of the main principles for IPSA is that MPs' staff are paid fairly, in recognition of the roles that they do. To ensure this, IPSA has committed to undertake a periodic market review of salaries.
2. Previous market reviews in 2016 and 2019 were carried out by a third-party supplier, but in 2022 IPSA conducted a review in-house for the first time. In taking this approach, IPSA will be able to build up a more comprehensive picture of MPs' staff roles in relation to the market over time, which will assist in future decision-making.
3. This first part of the work, which is covered by this report, looked specifically at the salary ranges to check that they are not out of step with the market. A second phase of work in 2023-24 will build on this and focus on detailed aspects of staff pay and remuneration that we know from our customers are longstanding issues:
  - Career and pay progression
  - Equality issues, and a full Equality Impact Assessment
  - Existing Job descriptions and roles
    - Job descriptions and Job titles
    - Suitability of current pay bands
  - New pay bands
  - Flexible working
  - Regional pay including 'London Weighting'
  - Living Pensions.

## About the MPs' staffing budget

4. IPSA is not the employer of MPs' staff. It establishes the framework for MPs' staff to be employed and paid appropriately – including template contracts, job descriptions and standard pay ranges – and provides a budget to each individual MP as the employer. It is up to the discretion of the MP how they choose to employ staff, into which roles and the level of salary, within that framework.

5. The staffing budget is normally adjusted each financial year. During the Covid pandemic, increased funding was provided to help MPs' offices cope with a significant rise in casework. In 2022-23, this increase was confirmed for the remainder of the current Parliament, providing for an additional whole-time-equivalent staff member at the caseworker level for each office.
6. Since 2021-22, IPSA has applied annual increases to staff salaries automatically (unless staff members are opted out), as a way of reducing administrative burden and helping to ensure greater consistency in annual increases. The outcomes from the market review are separate from decisions about any automatic increase that might be applied by IPSA to the staffing budget.

## Purpose of reviewing the 2022-23 salary ranges

7. To review the current MPs' staff salary ranges for market competitiveness. The process should be fair and transparent, and it should promote equality of pay and offer parity with other comparable roles. It should also however be sensitive to the unique nature of the MP staff role and working environment, which is not matched in other workplaces.
8. The market review of salary pay ranges is an objective look at whether the ranges are comparable with similar roles across the UK – it does not look at individual pay decisions taken within MP's offices. The deliberately wide IPSA salary ranges capture several job roles and activities within them, and they are intended to provide MPs with the flexibility to make individual decisions on the pay mix of their staff, subject to their parliamentary needs.

## Aim

9. To match the remuneration for a particular job role to the 'market rate,' and therefore to ensure MPs can recruit and retain staff. It is more effective to retain staff than it is to recruit, so a benchmarking process seeks to ensure that employers are paying what is appropriate for a particular role.

## Objectives

10. The objectives of the review were to:
  - Review the upper and lower points of each salary band with reference to market data on comparable jobs.

- Ensure all salary bands are at or above the National Living Wage and that MPs have the option of paying all staff the Voluntary or ‘Real’ Living Wage (VLW).
  - To correct or update the bands as appropriate and to futureproof the bands until the next review.
  - To ensure updates to salary bands provide flexibility and support staff retention.
11. The review considered the challenging wider trends of recruitment and retention. Feedback from MPs’ staff representatives are that their jobs are in many ways unique, because of the specific pressures and combination of responsibilities. This benchmarking approach attempts to both understand the prevailing market conditions for equivalent job levels and to take account of the varied and mixed nature of MP staff roles in selecting the appropriate roles for comparison.

## Methodology and research

12. The process for this market review is based on the job profiling method. Job profiling is more accurate than other approaches and involves assessing the roles, responsibilities, and duties of similar roles to make a suitable comparison. MPs’ staff pay ranges are split into seven job roles within three job ‘families’.
13. The review used pay data from an external source, Incomes Data Research (IDR)<sup>1</sup>. IDR data is split into job categories, which were then mapped as closely as possible to IPSA job families. Following the mapping, generic job roles from IDR were used to pull data on relevant categories of administrative, casework, policy/research, and parliamentary roles. Other desk-based internet research was also conducted for validation purposes to provide assurance that the right types of roles were selected for analysis and comparison. This yielded data from across the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors. Because of the varied nature of an MPs’ staff role and the fact that each IPSA job role covers several IDR jobs levels, the market ranges in some bands are quite wide, while in others they are slightly narrower.
14. MPs’ staff roles contain an unusual mix of elements, and therefore some job families and levels were mapped against several IDR categories, including some at high levels of seniority and role responsibility. This approach produced very wide-ranging market quartile ranges, with comparison of the upper quartile of the highest category against the

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<sup>1</sup> Incomes Data Research (IDR) <https://www.incomesdataresearch.co.uk/>

maximum of the relevant IPSA pay band. To retain the integrity in and between the salary bands and using a similar approach as in previous years, the review methodology applied an upper limit of +5% increase on the maximum of a band. The exception to this was where larger increases were required to match the voluntary Real Living Wage.

## Staff engagement and feedback

### Description of MP staff

*MPs' staff act as a gatekeeper - monitoring the MP's email inbox, responding to members of the public, the media, and lobby groups, and meeting with constituents. Staff can also serve as advisers - keeping up to date with recent debates and legislation, as well as relevant local, national, and international news before briefing their MP.*

*Some staff have a crucial role to play in curating and maintaining the MP's public image - drafting speeches and writing copy for press releases, the MP's website, and Twitter.*

*Others act as office managers, chiefs of staff and fulfil a wide range of administrative roles. Some staff may stay in their roles long-term, while others move on to pursue various other careers - in politics and beyond.*

Dr R McKee, UCL Constitution Unit<sup>2</sup>

15. During the past three years since the previous benchmarking review, there has been regular engagement with MPs' staff, and many of the concerns raised by the staff are contained in the reports noted below, among others. Their feedback has been taken on board and where possible has influenced the recommendations on salary ranges contained within this paper.

- *Internal IPSA surveys*
- [Annual survey of MPs and their staff - IPSA March22](#)
- [The secret caseworker blog: My pay has not increased in line with my workload - May 2022](#)
- ['We can't switch off': MP's staff member reveals mental health pressure - May 2022.](#)

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<sup>2</sup> [MPs' Staff: a study of the 'unsung heroes' of parliament | The Constitution Unit - UCL - University College London](#)

## Review findings

16. The general approach following review of the IDR data was to use the upper and lower quartiles as a guide to determine whether IPSA pay ranges were out of step with the market. The table below shows the market quartiles from the data when it was analysed in autumn 2022.

Raw data market review findings July – October 2022 using IDR dataset				
	London		Outside London	
Job family	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
Level 1 Administrative	£18,574.88	£27,078.5	£18,144.75	£27,842
Level 2 Administrative	£24,849.5	£29,180	£24,578.25	£26,591
Level 3 Administrative	£30,452	£52,243	£30,445	£48,500
Level 1 Executive	£19,087.75	£29,409	£18,890	£27,500
Level 2 Executive	£33,110.25	£50,792	£27,495.50	£43,806
Level 2 Research	£24,668	£34,309	£24,668	£33,972
Level 3 Research	£38,234	£57,520	£30,453	£58,146

Table 1: Raw market data for IPSA job families

17. The following table provides information about which IPSA job roles were affected by the market review.



IPSA Job Family	IDR roles used for comparison	Market review changes
<b>Administrative 1 (Administrative Officer)</b>	Administration Business Manager Administrative Assistant Administrator/Officer Executive Assistant/PA Office Manager Receptionist Team Secretary	London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase minimum to Voluntary Living Wage</li> </ul> Outside London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase minimum to Voluntary Living Wage</li> <li>Increase maximum by 2%</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative 2 (Senior Administrative Officer)</b>	Administration Business Manager Administrative Assistant Administrator/Officer Civil Service Executive Officer Executive Assistant/PA Office Manager Project Officer Receptionist Team Secretary	London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change</li> </ul> Outside London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase minimum by 5%.</li> </ul>
<b>Administrative 3 (Office Manager)</b>	Admin/Business Manager Civil Service Higher Executive Officer Civil Service Senior Executive Officer Finance Manager Office Manager Operations Manager	London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase maximum by 4%.</li> </ul> Outside London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase minimum by 1.5%.</li> <li>Increase maximum by 2.3%.</li> </ul>
<b>Executive 1 (Caseworker)</b>	Civil Service Executive Officer Customer Service 1st Tier Supervisor Customer Service Adviser Customer Service Specialist Adviser PR (Public Relations) Comms Officer Social Worker (Level 1)	London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change</li> </ul> Outside London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change</li> </ul>
<b>Executive 2 (Senior Caseworker)</b>	Civil Service Higher Executive Officer Civil Service Senior Executive Officer Customer Service 2nd Tier Supervisor Customer Service Manager Data Analyst PR/Comms Manager Project Manager Social Worker (Level 2&3) Statistician	London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase minimum by 3.5%.</li> <li>Increase maximum by 5% (capped)</li> </ul> Outside London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase maximum by 5% (capped)</li> </ul>
<b>Research 2 (Parliamentary Assistant)</b>	Civil Service Executive Officer Civil Service Higher Executive Officer PR/Comms Officer Project Officer Research & Policy Adviser Researcher	London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change</li> </ul> Outside London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase minimum by 3.5%</li> </ul>
<b>Research 3 (Senior Parliamentary Assistant)</b>	Civil Service Grade 7 Civil Service Senior Executive Officer Operations Manager Project Manager Research & Policy Manager Research Manager Researcher	London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase maximum by 5% (capped)</li> </ul> Outside London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase maximum by 5% (capped)</li> </ul>

Table 2: Description of changes to the salary ranges based on market data



18. The only job role that does not easily compare across the market is the Chief of Staff role. The job title Chief of Staff is included within the Administrative job family, according to IPSA's framework, whereas the traditional roles and responsibilities fall more usually within the sphere of political advice which would suggest that Research 3 may be more appropriate. Addressing this and similar issues will fall into the second part of the benchmarking project, along with any other identified changes to bandings.

## Voluntary Living Wage

19. Once the benchmarking exercise was concluded as shown in the table above, the IPSA Board took the decision to increase the minimum of the pay levels above the statutory minimum. The Board felt that the Voluntary Living Wage (also known as the Real Living Wage), rather than the statutory minimum, was the appropriate level for the minimum of the Administrative 1 pay range. It was therefore uplifted to £23,303 within London and £21,255 outside London as the minimum payable to staff.

## Automatic annual increase

20. Since the 2021-22 financial year, IPSA applies an automatic increase to MPs' staff salaries unless they are opted out. A corresponding increase is made to the staffing budget. It is intended that this encourages MPs to pass on these increases to their staff, provide for a more consistent approach to pay across offices, and reduce the administrative burden on both MPs and IPSA. There is no guarantee of annual budgetary increases, and the IPSA Board determines whether an increase is appropriate each year.
21. While the automatic annual increase is separate from the market review, it does form part of the overall package of remuneration. The staffing budget for 2023-24 has been uplifted by 6.5% to accommodate the market rate increases to some of the bands and a 4.9% automatic increase to all staff on the IPSA payroll. Therefore, the maximum points of all bands have been increased by at least 4.9% (in some cases the market rates pointed to a slightly higher increase), to ensure all staff can receive the annual increase, including those at the top of their band.
22. Full information on staff pay ranges for 2023-24 can be found below as well as on the IPSA website and are effective from 1 April 2023.

## MP's staff pay ranges for 2023-24

Job family	London Area Staff		Non-London Area Staff	
	Annual minimum (£)	Annual Maximum (£)	Annual minimum (£)	Annual Maximum (£)
Level 1 Administrative	£23,303	£33,701	£21,255	£28,639
Level 2 Administrative	£26,251	£40,308	£24,567	£35,740
Level 3 Administrative	£33,759	£52,775	£30,445	£49,711
Level 1 Executive	£24,000	£38,197	£21,529	£34,599
Level 2 Executive	£33,110	£45,927	£28,311	£43,673
Level 2 Research	£25,500	£39,302	£24,688	£36,087
Level 3 Research	£36,575	£56,312	£32,811	£49,624
Employed Interns	£19,851	£23,303	£19,851	£23,303
MP Representative	£64,828		£64,828	

Table 3: Final pay ranges for 2023-24

## Further work

23. The market review of MPs' staff salaries was the first part of a wider project looking at staff total remuneration and reward. It had a focus solely on a market review of the current salary bands. Part two commencing in spring 2023 will seek to work collaboratively with stakeholders on issues raised such as regional pay, career progressions, and equality and diversity. This will be contingent on the outcome from the Speaker's Conference.