

Consultation report: Professionalising the career path for MPs' staff

June 2026

IPSA

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Summary

1. IPSA's role in relation to MPs' staffing is one of providing appropriate funding and financial regulation, combined with support through customer service. MPs are provided with a budget for staffing and they, not IPSA, are the legal employers of their staff. To support MPs to fulfil their role as an MP and as an employer, IPSA provides some standardised model terms and conditions and pay ranges for MPs to use and provides the payroll function on their behalf. Use of these contracts and pay ranges is a condition of receiving public funds for staffing. How MPs choose to use their staffing budget to staff their office within the guardrails set out by IPSA is their responsibility as the employer.
2. Since 2022 IPSA has been delivering a project to improve the working lives of MPs' staff. This was in response to feedback from MPs, their staff and staff representatives. This work aligns with the recommendations from the [Speaker's Conference](#) of the same year, which looked at the employment arrangements of MPs' staff.
3. A [consultation on MP staffing](#) was launched on 6 October 2025 setting out proposals for better consistency and the further professionalisation of MPs' staffing. As prescribed within the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009, we contacted all statutory consultees. We also communicated with other senior stakeholders and our customers. The consultation ran for just under four weeks, closing on 31 October 2025. We are grateful to those who took the time to share their views with us during this engagement as well as those who responded formally to the consultation. This report summarises the responses we received and the decisions that were made as a result.

Background to the consultation

4. IPSA's ambition is to continue to improve the professionalisation of a career in an MP's office. We seek to encourage fair and consistent practices across offices while recognising the unique employment landscape between the MP as an employer, IPSA as the funding provider and financial regulator, and the House, which provides HR advice. This is all set against our statutory role to ensure value for money for the taxpayer.
5. When entering Parliament, some MPs may have experience of running a small business or leading a team from their previous professional life. They may have confidence hiring staff and following good employment practices. Other MPs may lack this experience and will need support to learn these skills. By stipulating the use of our contracts and pay

ranges, staff are provided with a stable set of terms. It means that people working for an MP have access to the same benefits as their colleagues in other MPs' offices, equal opportunities for growth and development, and comparable salaries to their peers.

6. We want to support MPs to develop their staff while working in Parliament or the constituency, and to provide their staff with a framework for demonstrating transferable skills when they leave for other roles in the public or private sector. This in turn supports the work MPs do on behalf of their constituents.
7. Over recent years we have introduced new employment tools to ensure MPs are supported by high-quality staff and can focus on the role of being an MP. This has included the introduction of automatic annual uplifts to staff members' salaries to recognise the increasing cost of living, updates to the model employment contract to incorporate legislative changes, expansion of some of the family leave entitlements to benefit staff, and the recognition of past service so that staff can now move between MPs' offices without losing certain occupational entitlements.
8. The next natural step is to revisit the package of support around MPs' staff pay ranges and begin to introduce a career and pay progression framework. The intention is to give staff a clear development ladder through which they can either pursue a career in an MP's office or gain and develop valuable skills that could be transferred to a different role.
9. In developing these proposals, we have sought input from stakeholders and interest groups as well as conducting our own research on MPs' staffing. We have interacted with members of staff, trade union representatives and other staff groups to help us progress the project in a direction that will work and be understood.
10. In September 2025, IPSA Board members approved a consultation document that covered:
 - Revisiting the MPs' staff pay ranges after a market rate benchmarking exercise and amending the width and overlap of the ranges where possible
 - Creating a minimum pay policy for the lowest level of the pay ranges
 - Introducing a new leadership level to test out competencies that relate to supporting MPs to discharge their legal duties – the intention for this role is to sit above administrative or operational functions and would lead the office at strategic oversight level
 - Creating a ring-fenced budget for staff training and development outside of the staffing budget

- Updating the job description items that IPSA provides to support a move towards growth and development – this sat alongside questions asking if there was a need to reduce the number of job titles
- Longer-term ambitions to progress with a wider move towards a competency-based approach, which might include a spine point system for MPs' staff pay
- Consideration of locality-based pay ranges including possible high-cost area allowances.

Responses to the consultation

11. We received a total of 458 responses, of which 440 were received via the online survey and 18 as written responses via email.
12. Of the online responses, 423 (96%) were from MP's staff members, 14 (3%) were from MPs, one response was from a former MP, one response was from a member of the public and one response was from someone who self-described as 'other'. The online survey allowed for the opportunity to provide comments on the wider questions.
13. Written responses via email included those from MPs' staff members including office managers and union representatives.
14. Most respondents wished for their response to remain confidential.

Issue 1: Review the pay band structure

15. Since 2016 IPSA has committed to benchmarking the IPSA pay ranges to the market rates every three years. In addition, each year the pay ranges are updated where necessary to reflect changes to the National Living Wage (NLW) and to allow for a cost-of-living increase for every staff member. The staffing budget is also adjusted by a corresponding percentage amount to enable MPs to meet these increases. This has led to the difference between the bottom and the top of each job family pay range growing wider.
16. Our proposal was to use the market data as we have used previously (most recently in 2022 and 2023) to set the London and non-London pay ranges for each job family. We proposed that after benchmarking had been applied, IPSA should 'streamline' the pay ranges by looking to reduce the differentials between the top and bottom of each band in the interest of greater consistency.
17. 93% of the online survey respondents agreed that the pay ranges should be revisited to ensure consistency of width and overlap between job families, 4% were not sure and 1% disagreed. The other 2% left this question blank. Respondents felt the current bands are too wide and that there is also currently too much of an overlap between bands. A

common theme from respondents was that caseworker/senior caseworker salaries should be more in line with the research roles and that pay across all the job families needed to be more closely aligned.

18. Some respondents felt that experience should be considered to determine pay, whereas others felt the bands should be benchmarked against other public sector organisations. Others highlighted problems caused by the level of the pay bands including issues with recruitment and retention, a lack of a clear pay or career progression pathway, and the need to prevent a widening gap between the highest and lowest paid roles.

Issue 2: Create a minimum pay policy for substantive roles

19. The consultation proposed setting a minimum pay policy for staff in substantive roles to ensure these pay ranges always start higher than the NLW. The impact of introducing such a policy would mean some staff who fall below the minimum pay level (excluding interns) would automatically move up to the new minimum. IPSA would continue to periodically benchmark against market rates and increase the minimum pay where appropriate.
20. 82% of the online survey respondents agreed that IPSA should create a minimum pay policy for substantive roles, 12% were unsure, 6% disagreed and a very small number left this question blank.
21. Many respondents felt this proposal would help to improve recruitment and retention, ensure fairer hiring practices, reduce exploitation and ensure more consistency between offices. A few also commented that this proposal would improve access to parliamentary roles, in particular entry-level positions. Other respondents commented that flexibility by offices needed to be retained.
22. There were mixed responses as to whether interns should also be included. Some respondents felt that they should be to increase access whereas others preferred a clear distinction between intern and entry-level substantive positions.
23. We also asked for views on what an appropriate level or percentage above the NLW would be. We received 241 comments in response to this question online. The most common response was 3% above NLW, then 5%, followed by the Real Living Wage (also known as the 'voluntary living wage' as set each year by the Living Wage Foundation). Other common suggestions were 2%, 4%, 10%, 15% and 20% above NLW and linking increases to inflation.

Issue 3: Creation of a new 'leadership' level

24. As part of the work to professionalise the environment of working in an MP's office, we have been looking closely at the existing job families, job titles and the items that make

up each individual job description. The consultation asked for views about introducing a specific leadership role and corresponding pay range that sits at a higher level than the existing 'level 3' roles, and which spans the three job families. Subject matter experts would remain in the Administrative, Executive or Research job families, but a new level would be created for roles requiring significant leadership and oversight responsibilities and would formalise some of the responsibilities currently held by some office managers and chiefs of staff.

25. This would ensure pay for leadership roles is commensurate with the level of responsibility required to support the MP to discharge their legal duties as an employer, as well as:

- Discharging their legal responsibilities as a data controller
- Long-term resource planning, management and prioritisation
- Financial planning and budget responsibility
- HR/people management (including an understanding of employment law)
- Overseeing the smooth running of the interface with IPSA.

26. We proposed testing out this approach with a small number of offices first, ensuring the required skills and competencies are met before staff are placed into this role and pay band.

27. Responses were mixed: 43% of the online survey respondents agreed that creating an additional leadership role was the right approach, 30% disagreed, 26% were unsure and 1% left this question blank. We received 306 comments from online survey respondents.

28. Of those who commented, two main themes were highlighted: concern about the impact on the staffing budget and concern that pay for existing roles should be prioritised first, particularly for caseworkers. However, those who supported the proposal commented that it would help staff retention, create a clear progression route and better reflect the roles of staff who currently have leadership responsibilities.

29. Those who disagreed felt that this would make things too complex and create more unnecessary hierarchy. Some also disagreed on the basis that leadership roles were already being carried out by office managers and/or chiefs of staff.

Issue 4: Set the working week to default to 37.5 hours per week (FTE) in new MPs' staff employment contracts

30. IPSA provides a model employment contract for MPs' staff and a tool to facilitate the creation of contracts for new starters. When an employment contract is created for a

new member of staff, the MP chooses the full-time equivalent (FTE) working hours per week, between 37.5 hours per week up to a maximum of 42 hours per week. This impacts on a staff member's hourly pay, which is relevant to ensuring they are paid at least the minimum wage.

31. The consultation sought views on setting the working week at 37.5 hours per week in the contract generator tool by default unless the MP explicitly overrides it and chooses a different working week up to 42 hours. This would increase consistency and simplify administration.
32. 64% of the online survey respondents agreed that IPSA should apply a default to a 37.5-hour week, 24% were unsure, 11% disagreed and 1% left this question blank. We received a total of 194 comments to this question. We note that some respondents appeared to be confused about the proposal, which was to apply the default to new contracts only, and were under the impression that a change would be made retrospectively to existing employment contracts.
33. Many respondents who agreed with the proposal commented that this would help promote transparency, consistency and fairness across offices. Others felt that it would help to improve work-life balance and family life. Respondents also commented that this would put things more in line with other public sector roles.
34. A common theme was the preference to retain flexibility, therefore preferring to retain a manual override. On the other hand, some respondents commented that there should be no option to override the standard 37.5 hours as this could lead to unfairness. Those who disagreed commented that the proposal might lead to more unpaid overtime and increase administrative burdens.

Issue 5: Creation of ring-fenced staff development budget for MPs' staff training, health and welfare

35. Since 2020 IPSA has provided MPs with £4,000 per year, added to the staffing budget, to support work-related health and wellbeing needs as well as training and development for their staff. Feedback from staff representative groups including the Wellness Working Group has flagged that workload pressures mean that in many cases this funding is used to increase staffing resource within offices rather than for its intended purpose.
36. Given the importance of training and development in a competency-based progression framework, we proposed to create a separate, ring-fenced budget for the purpose of supporting staff in being able to access training and development as well as health and welfare support. Due to the potential sensitivity around health and welfare arrangements and the risk of identification of individual staff members, IPSA would

publish spend against this new ring-fenced budget in aggregate across all MPs rather than attributed to individual offices on an annual basis.

37. We received a total of 390 comments, the majority of which were positive, with around 54 who disagreed and/or raised some concerns. Respondents felt that a ring-fenced budget for staff development and wellbeing would help with retention of staff, improve personal development and improve the support and quality of services available to constituents.
38. Of the few respondents that disagreed and/or raised concerns, some highlighted that free training is available from the House and that it could open offices up to having to pay for unnecessary, expensive training. Others felt a ring-fenced budget was not needed as this is being managed well with funding provided through the staffing budget. They were also concerned about media and public perception of such funding. A few commented that offices need to retain flexibility over their budgets and therefore did not favour ring-fencing.
39. Regarding publication of staff training, development, health and welfare costs, the majority agreed they should be published in aggregate, highlighting this would allow for transparency while also ensuring that MPs are not worried about approving development and wellbeing costs in case these are not perceived by some parts of the public and the media as legitimate business costs that are essential to running an MP's office and supporting their staff.
40. The consultation also asked more generally about how IPSA could provide more meaningful transparency to staffing funding and how it is used to support MPs' work. We received a total of 287 comments.
41. Some respondents commented that making more information available to the public about what MPs and their staff actually do day-to-day may support meaningful transparency, such as giving examples of job descriptions, tasks they work on, the types and volume of cases they manage, and how these can vary between constituencies due to their different needs. A common suggestion was to stop using the term 'expenses' in relation to staffing and/or to publishing staffing costs in another location online away from other 'expense types'.
42. Many respondents, using a template response, commented that IPSA should consider a national pay scale for each role with weightings applied for high-cost areas to help with transparency.
43. Some respondents were positive about the recent Citizens' Forum and believed that more public engagement exercises and educational pieces like this would help improve the public's understanding.

Issue 6: Updating the IPSA job description tool with items that more closely cover what roles are undertaken within an MPs' office

44. IPSA provides template job descriptions for MPs' staff roles. We have had feedback that the job description items do not adequately represent the types of roles MPs' staff are currently undertaking. The consultation proposed to retain existing job titles but make some changes to the content of the job description items to better reflect what is happening in a modern MP's office.
45. 47% of respondents to the online survey agreed with the proposal to update the IPSA job description items to more accurately reflect MPs' staff roles, 38% were unsure, 8% disagreed and 7% left this question blank. We received a total of 176 comments on this question. Email responses were positive towards the proposal. Respondents felt this would aid career progression, reflect development and help with recognition of the complex work staff undertake.
46. A common theme in responses was the importance of retaining flexibility due to the differing needs across MPs' offices. A common suggestion was the need to work with and consult staff who have experience in their roles when creating new job description items. A few respondents favoured inclusion of specifications or further requirements in job descriptions, such as requiring certain GCSE passes or specific skills. Others requested the creation of specialist roles, e.g. specialised casework roles that require specific knowledge and/or qualifications.
47. We also sought views on whether the number of job titles should be reduced to improve clarity and consistency. Of the online respondents, 62% answered 'no', 29% answered 'yes' and 9% left this question blank. We received a total of 222 comments to this question. The most common response, particularly from those who responded 'no', was that flexibility needs to be maintained due to the diversity and variations between MPs' offices and the types of work they deal with. Respondents who favoured a reduction in the number of job titles felt that reducing the number would help improve fairness and consistency and standardise expectations. A common view expressed was that there are currently too many overlaps between roles.

Issue 7: Towards a competency framework and pay spine points

48. In addition to the improvements to pay and job descriptions, the consultation also set out IPSA's longer-term ambition to introduce a competency framework for MPs' staff complemented by a clear pay progression structure. A competency framework would link a staff member's development and compensation to the demonstration of specific skills, behaviours and knowledge. It would define clear competency requirements for each role and outline proficiency levels, enabling transparent career pathways.

49. We acknowledged that moving to a competency approach would be a large structural change for both MPs' offices and IPSA to implement, and therefore we set out the intention to pilot a competency-based pay and career progression approach with a small number of offices, starting with a new leadership role in the first instance as described above.
50. We received a total of 380 responses to this question. Most agreed with the proposal, with about two-thirds in support. Respondents who agreed with the proposal felt that this would help with retention of staff and with career and pay progression. However, respondents both in favour and against felt that MPs, managers and staff members themselves would need training on this approach, and that there would need to be HR and management procedures in place. Those who disagreed commented that a pay progression framework based on length of service would be fairer.
51. Secondly, we proposed a spine point system in the context of MPs' staffing. The consultation acknowledged that in many settings there has been a move to phase out traditional spine points systems where reaching the top of the scale was linked specifically to length of service, and therefore that any new system would need to be bespoke for MPs' staff. If we were to adopt this approach, we would anticipate fewer spine points within a pay band and therefore fewer increments such that, if a staff member were recognised by their employer as having demonstrated the required competencies for a pay increase over a five-year period (or the life of a parliament), any individual could move up the range to the top of the band regardless of their age or length of service.
52. We received a total of 335 responses to this question. Most comments, around 80%, were positive and in support of a spine point system. Those who were in favour highlighted that this would help to reduce inconsistencies and improve fairness within and between offices. Respondents believed it would improve transparency and help set expectations on pay and progression outright.
53. Those who disagreed with the introduction of spine points felt this system would not be suitable in the context given the small size of MPs' offices and the variations between them. Some respondents expressed a preference to retain flexibility. Again, respondents highlighted the need for training for MPs and other managers alongside a clear criterion for managers to follow.

Issue 8: To seek views on whether the pay ranges based on location are appropriate for staff based both in Westminster and the constituency

54. We sought views on whether IPSA should retain distinct London and non-London pay ranges, or alternatively whether there should be single pay ranges for all staff regardless of location. In recent years we had received an increasing amount of feedback from staff

that the London/non-London split does not reflect the reality of high-cost areas outside of London, particularly in South East England and other large cities. We had also heard staff advocate for fairer treatment in terms of pay between Westminster and constituency staff owing to high living and commuting costs.

55. We received a total of 364 comments to this question. Most of the responses were in support of locality-based pay ranges. Respondents felt this would address the cost-of-living pressures across the country. However, there were mixed views as to whether locality-based pay should remain London-specific or whether other areas should be included, with some respondents believing that the London/non-London split is now outdated.
56. Those who were not in favour of locality-based pay felt it may be too complex to measure and implement, that it could lead to unfairness, issues with recruitment in lower-paid areas, some areas being inadvertently disadvantaged, inconsistencies and some areas feeling undervalued.
57. We also sought views on whether instead of IPSA determining who is entitled to locality-based pay, the MP should be able to exercise discretion about when to provide a 'high-cost area allowance' to their staff. Of online respondents who answered this question, 53% agreed with the proposal, 44% disagreed with the proposal and 3% left the question blank. We received a total of 169 comments.
58. Respondents who agreed with the proposal felt this would help with recruitment and retention, particularly in higher-cost areas. Others felt it would allow an appropriate level of flexibility for MPs. Those who disagreed also felt it could be open to abuse and expressed concerns about favouritism as well as inconsistency. Some respondents would like a clear definition of a 'high-cost area' and details on how this would be decided and then implemented.

Equality impact assessment

59. The final section of the consultation asked for views on any possible equality impacts arising from the proposals.
60. We received a total of 187 comments for this question. There were several respondents who were not sure about the impacts on equality and a number who commented that there were none that they knew of.
61. Of those respondents who did identify equality impacts, some highlighted that the role of caseworker is often undervalued and the gap between caseworker and other roles, such as researcher, should be equalised.

62. The gender pay gap and gender inequality in general were noted numerous times, with some highlighting the gap between staff working in Parliament and those working in the constituency, suggesting this contributed to a gender pay gap. Some respondents thought the proposals outlined in the consultation could disadvantage those who work part-time or have caring responsibilities, who are more likely to be women. Many also commented that the introduction of new leadership roles may widen the ethnicity and gender pay gap.
63. Some comments highlighted inequalities affecting those with a disability and thought IPSA could offer more disability support. This is because not all disability costs can be met by the Access to Work Scheme.

Our decisions

64. Following the consultation, the IPSA board confirmed the following decisions:

- **Reviewing the pay ranges:** We have introduced new pay ranges for 2026/27 following benchmarking and other changes set out below and will look at streamlining the pay ranges over the course of the current Parliament.
- **Creating a minimum pay policy for substantive roles:** IPSA has introduced a minimum pay policy such that the minimum of all substantive job roles will always sit at least 3% above the National Living Wage. This was the most suggested figure in the consultation responses, and we agreed that it was a reasonable level at which to set minimum pay.
- **A ring-fenced budget for staff development and the spend on staff health, wellbeing and development:** IPSA has created a new budget allocating £4,000 to each office rather than removing any money from the existing staffing budget. These costs will be published in aggregate across MPs' offices.
- **Creation of a new 'leadership' level above the existing pay range:** IPSA will trial this approach during the 2026-27 financial year with a small number of offices. We will learn from this trial and further engagement with MPs and their staff before making a decision about whether to add this new role formally to the staffing framework.
- **Set the working week to default to 37.5 hours per week (FTE) in new MPs' staff employment contracts:** IPSA has implemented this via the new starter tool from April 2026 but with the ability for an MP to override this within the current parameters (37.5-42 hours). Existing contracts are not impacted (although working week hours could be changed via the contractual change process). For interns, the FTE should be fixed at 37.5 hours to ensure compliance with minimum wage

legislation, and we will implement this via the new starter tool but with no override. Internships are intended to be learning or work experience opportunities lasting no more than 12 months.

65. Following parliamentary approval of IPSA's budget estimate, we announced an increase to MPs' staffing budget of 5% in 2026-27. This was to accommodate adjustments to pay ranges following the market benchmarking exercise that uplifted the bottom and the top of each pay range by 5%, a 3.5% cost-of-living increase for MPs' staff, application of the new minimum pay policy, and in recognition of the particular challenges of these roles, further increases of 2% at the top and bottom of the pay ranges for roles in Executive 1 and Executive 2 (primarily, caseworkers and senior caseworkers).
66. Based on feedback from MPs' offices about the significant increase in workload, particularly constituency casework, IPSA has also introduced a new staffing support fund of £7.728 million to provide targeted support and additional resource for offices according to need.
67. We have confirmed our longer-term ambitions relating to a competency framework aligned with a clearer pay point structure to support career progression, although there is further work to design how this system should work. While the indicative timeline for this work is 2027-2029, this depends on preparatory work undertaken in 2026-27. IPSA will consider the outcomes from the leadership trial along with participant feedback to assess how a competency approach could be best applied across all MPs' staff roles and at the same time consider updating the job descriptions accordingly.
68. A second area for further consideration is how pay ranges might be constructed under a competency framework, including whether this should include locality-based differences. While the idea was generally supported, feedback to IPSA on the treatment of London and non-London pay was mixed, including differing views on whether a London weighting or a single UK-wide pay range should apply. As a result, no clear consensus emerged on the preferred approach. However, there were clear concerns raised about the risk of increasing inconsistency if MPs were given discretion to apply locality-based pay. This suggests that any pay structure adopted should be clear, consistent and transparent to all. We will return to the issue of locality-based pay as part of the longer-term work to realise a competency-based pay and career progression framework.