

Professionalising the career path for MPs' staff

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IPSA

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Professionalising the career path for MPs' staff

Introduction

1. IPSA was created in 2009 by the [Parliamentary Standards Act](#). The Act was amended in 2010 by the [Constitutional Reform and Governance Act](#).
2. This legislation gave us three main responsibilities:
 - to regulate MPs' staffing and business costs
 - to determine MPs' pay and pension arrangements
 - to provide financial support to MPs in carrying out their parliamentary functions.
3. We are independent of Parliament and the government. This means we make fair and impartial decisions about MPs' pay, pensions and business costs.
4. 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. In order 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 also provides the payroll function on their behalf. Using 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.
5. IPSA's separate review of its determination on MPs' pay included a [Citizens' Forum on MP pay and funding](#). The Forum recommendations emphasise the importance of MPs being supported by knowledgeable, dedicated and fairly paid staff. While the proposals in this consultation were already in development at the time of the Forum, these recommendations align closely with our ambitions for further professionalisation of the MP staff role, leading to improved development opportunities and staff retention.

Background: Our ambition for MPs' staffing

6. Our ambition is to continue to improve the professionalisation of a career in an MP's office. We seek to encourage fair and consistent practice 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. In any organisation, staffing is usually both the biggest spend and asset. These proposals seek to ensure that an MP can be fully supported to discharge their legal obligations as an employer, and as elected Members of Parliament.

7. 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 Conference¹ of the same year which looked at the employment arrangements of MPs' staff.
8. IPSA provides the following tools to all MPs for use when hiring staff to work in their office on parliamentary business:
 - model employment contracts
 - dedicated salary ranges which are benchmarked every three years
 - model job descriptions for the three job families.
9. IPSA also funds both statutory and occupational entitlements to staff and directly pays staff members through the payroll. This ensures the correct deductions for National Insurance contributions, tax and pension contributions.
10. MPs enter Parliament to legislate and to represent their constituents. Being the employer of a small team of people alongside handling public funds and property leases has similarities with being a small business owner.
11. 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.
12. 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

¹ Speakers Conference on the employment conditions of Members' staff: Second report (2023) [Speaker's Conference on the employment conditions of Members' staff: Second Report](#)

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.

13. We have sought input on the direction of this work 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 staffing bodies to help us progress the project in a direction that will work and be understood.

14. 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.

- In 2021, we introduced automatic annual uplifts to staff members' salaries, to recognise the increasing cost of living. MPs, as employers, retain the flexibility to opt a staff member out of the automatic increase.
- We updated the model employment contract for all staff employed after the 2024 General Election. This new contract incorporated legislation changes and moved details about staff entitlements into our general guidance, allowing IPSA flexibility to update those entitlements, for example to keep up with legislation, without impacting on staff members' contracts.
- Earlier this year, we simplified and expanded some of the family leave entitlements to benefit staff and make it easier to understand and administer. If someone qualifies for statutory payments, occupational payments will also apply.
- Recognising past service was introduced in April 2025. In law, each MP is a separate employer but our new approach, which seeks to mirror continuous service, means that staff can move between MPs' offices without losing certain occupational entitlements, so long as there is no break in service of more than 60 days and the period of service did not end in gross misconduct. By removing this barrier, we hope to encourage easier movement of staff across MPs' offices and retain valuable skills and knowledge within the MPs' staff community.

15. A provision for loans of staff between MPs is being introduced in autumn 2025.

This will enable an MP to loan a staff member to another MP for an agreed but short period of time, for example to cover sick leave or assist a new MP with their office set-up. For the staff member, this may provide career and development opportunities they otherwise may not have within their current office.

16. 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.
17. 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, which could be transferred to a different role. We are working with the House of Commons to consider whether CPD or other accreditation could apply to MPs' staff so their development can be demonstrated in any future job applications.

How to respond

18. Please use our [online survey](#) to submit your response.
19. You can also email consultation@theipsa.org.uk if you prefer. **Please do not send us responses by post** as this may delay the processing of your response.
20. While you are strongly encouraged to respond using the online survey, please contact us if you need reasonable adjustments to enable an alternative response. You should email us at consultation@theipsa.org.uk, and a member of our team will contact you to coordinate your response.
21. We will summarise the responses we receive when we publish our decisions. In doing so, we may refer to individual respondents and the content of their responses. We may also publish a list of who responded. If you would like your response to be treated as confidential, please say so clearly in your response. We will not quote from confidential responses or attribute the views in them to any particular respondent. Whether your response is confidential or not, we will not publish your email address or any other contact details, in line with our compliance with data protection law and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). For more information about what we do with personal data, please see our [privacy notice](#).
22. **Please send us your response by 31 October 2025.**

Our focus for the life of this Parliament

Short-term aims

23. To meet our ambition for MPs' staff, we would like to hear views on some proposed changes to take effect from April 2026, which would lead to some longer-term developments across the life of this Parliament.
24. In line with our commitment to benchmark the pay ranges against market rates every three years, we will perform that exercise in time for April 2026 and amend the pay ranges accordingly. In doing that exercise we would look to address some of the feedback from staff around pay differentials and the different widths of pay bands across the three job families. At the bottom of the pay ranges, we would like to develop a minimum pay policy for those pay ranges that currently start at the National Living Wage. At the top of the pay ranges, we are considering introducing a new leadership role that sits above and is distinct from the existing job families.
25. We also would like to hear views on a technical change to set a default of a 37.5-hour standard working week, while retaining flexibility with an MP override.
26. To be able to support an increased focus on staff training, health and wellbeing, we would also welcome views on creating a ring-fenced staff development budget, with spend to be published in aggregate across all MPs.

Proposals for 2026-27

Issue 1: Review the pay band structure to ensure more consistency in width and overlap of the pay ranges while continuing to apply market benchmarking

27. Since 2016, IPSA has committed to benchmarking the IPSA pay ranges to the market rates for those roles every three years. This is standard practice in most companies or organisations to ensure that the salaries offered are competitive with other roles in that field. As staff salaries are usually the biggest outlay in any organisation, it also serves to ensure value for money and assurance that the rates are correct. When we undertake this exercise, we compare the roles within the job families and match them to the market rates rather than specific salaries within the range. In doing so, we are mindful of the wider public sector pay policies and affordability in the context of public finances. We intend to undertake this exercise in late 2025 in time for the start of the financial year in April 2026.
28. In addition, each year the pay ranges are updated where necessary to reflect changes to the National Living Wage 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 an MP to meet these increases. This has led to the difference between the bottom and the top of each job family pay range growing wider. We have heard feedback from MPs' staff and staff representatives that the architecture of the pay ranges should be revisited to reduce inequalities in pay across MPs' offices. We want to make sure that the salary ranges for MPs' staff are sustainable for the future and provide value for money for the taxpayer.

29. Our proposal is 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. Once the ranges are determined to be broadly comparable with the market, we will adjust them to ensure there is consistency of width and overlap across the three job families. The benefit of this approach would be to ensure that there is a clear understanding of pay progression in each role and to improve pay consistency in similar roles.

Question 1. Should IPSA revisit the pay ranges once the benchmarking exercise is concluded to ensure more consistent width and overlap between ranges?

Issue 2: Create a minimum pay policy for substantive roles to ensure fair pay at the lowest levels of the pay ranges

30. The pay range for interns currently uses the National Living Wage as the minimum and the London Voluntary Living Wage (as set by the Living Wage Foundation) as the maximum. This pay range is the same regardless of the working location of the intern, which gives the MP scope to decide the appropriate salary. An intern is a learning and development role, usually for a short and fixed period of time, and it may be right to ensure that substantive staff should, as a matter of policy, always be paid above the lowest level of the intern range. We are proposing setting a minimum pay policy for staff in substantive roles to ensure these pay ranges always start higher than the National Living Wage. We would welcome views on the appropriate level, for example of setting minimum pay at National Living Wage plus 2%. This does not mean that pay ranges would always use this as the bottom end of the range; we would continue to periodically benchmark against market rates and increase the minimum pay where required.
31. The impact of introducing such a policy would mean that some staff who fall below the minimum pay level (excluding interns) would automatically move up to the new minimum. However, offices may also need to consider the impact of this on pay structure and differentials within the office, for example where other staff

fall slightly above the new minimum. How to handle this would be a decision for each office based on their own circumstances.

Question 2a. Should IPSA create a minimum pay policy for substantive roles (excluding interns) using an appropriate fixed percentage above the National Living Wage?

Question 2b. What would you consider an appropriate fixed percentage or metric to be?

Issue 3: Creation of a new ‘leadership’ level above the existing pay range

32. 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 job roles that make up each individual job description. Currently there are three job families: Administrative, Executive, and Research. The Administrative job family is broken down into three levels from admin officer up to the office manager. The Executive and Research job families are broken down into two levels due to the nature of the roles in each job family when compared to the market rates for similar roles.
33. We have also received feedback that those individuals employed to run and oversee the office of an MP are restricted to the two job families - administration or research – but that this is not always the best fit for the office or an accurate description of the individual’s role or their skills and competencies.
34. We would like to hear 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. This would ensure pay for leadership roles is commensurate with the level of responsibility.
35. As employment law changes and requirements for employers intensify, combined with ever greater scrutiny on the management of public funds, we understand through feedback and engagement that MPs’ offices are also placed under increasing pressure. We hope that offering a specific leadership role would provide a greater level of support to the MP to assist them in discharging their legal duties as an employer. That support could include delegated authority to lead the strategic work of the office and ensure best practice is followed.

36. We anticipate that staff in this leadership role would provide the MP with support in the following areas:

- discharging their legal responsibilities as an employer and 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.

37. Many staff members are already performing this function, so this would more accurately reflect their role. As IPSA evolves to a principles-based approach, with an emphasis on accountability, decision-making and record-keeping, this leadership role will grow in its importance.

38. We anticipate reserving the job titles of Chief of Staff and Executive Office Manager for this new leadership role, alongside the MP representative role (where an MP is absent for a period). We propose to test out this approach with a small number of offices, ensuring that the required skills and competencies are met before staff are placed into this role and pay band.

Visualising the new leadership level		
Admin Job Family	Executive Job Family	Research Job Family
Intern		
Admin 1 Personal Assistant Executive Officer Administrative Officer Administration and Communications Officer	Executive 1 Caseworker Communications Officer Constituency Assistant Support Officer Constituency Support Officer Press Officer	
Admin 2 Senior Executive Officer Senior Admin Officer Administrative Manager Executive Assistant	Executive 2 Senior Caseworker Constituency Communications Manager Constituency Support Manager Senior Communications Officer Senior Casework Team Leader/Manager Senior Communications Advisor Senior Press Officer	Research 2 Parliamentary Assistant Researcher Research Officer Policy Assistant
Admin 3 Office Manager		Research 3 Senior Parliamentary Assistant Senior Researcher Research Manager Senior Policy Researcher
Leadership Leadership/strategic development Financial and budget responsibility HR/People Management (including understanding employment law) Support the MP as data controller The leadership would add these new requirements to the job roles of Executive Office Manager/Chief of Staff/ MP Representative		

Question 3. Is creating an additional leadership level above the three existing job families the right approach?

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

39. When an employment contract is created for a new member of staff, the MP chooses the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) working hours per week. Currently the range available to choose from is 37.5 hours per week up to a maximum of 42 hours per week. The hours worked per week affect the hourly rate of the individual based on the annual salary, and the hourly rate must always be at or above the National Living Wage.
40. In recent years according to the market rates, the minimum of the pay ranges in Admin 1 and Executive 1 have been set at or around the National Living Wage for 37.5 hours per week. Should an individual be placed at the bottom of the pay range but asked to work 40 hours per week, their salary is adjusted upwards to ensure they are meeting the hourly minimum wage.
41. We know that this can cause confusion, so we are suggesting that the working week is set at 37.5 hours per week in the contract generator tool by default, unless the MP explicitly overrides that and chooses a different working week up to 42 hours. This should improve consistency across staff and offices. There may be good reason to vary the hours worked for different staff, but we want to make sure that the choice to do that is a conscious one. In the absence of an explicit choice, we intend the default working week to apply.

Question 4. Should IPSA apply a default to all new contracts created on the online contract generator tool to a 37.5 hour working week, with the option to manually override that if a different FTE working week is desired?

Issue 5: Creation of a ring-fenced staff development budget for MPs' staff training, health, and welfare, with spend to be published in aggregate across all MPs

42. Under the current arrangements, MPs may use IPSA funding to support work-related health and wellbeing needs, as well as training and development for their staff. Since 2020 IPSA has provided the sum of £4,000 per year for this purpose, which is added to the staffing budget. 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 use.
43. Given the importance of training and development in a competency-based progression framework, we are proposing 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.

44. 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.

Question 5a. What are your views on creating a ring-fenced budget for staff development and the spend on staff wellbeing and development being published in aggregate?

45. We are not at this stage proposing immediate, wider changes to the way in which IPSA publishes other staffing costs, including payroll costs. We know that this remains a source of concern for some MPs and staff members, and feedback suggests that some MPs may choose not to increase staff salaries to avoid being seen as 'expensive'. On the other hand, funding for staff payroll is by far the largest portion of financial support provided to MPs to carry out their parliamentary work, and transparency about this is important.
46. In line with IPSA's objective of supporting trust in democracy, in recent years we have improved the narrative and contextual information that accompanies the publication of staffing and business costs data. We think there is still more that we can do to inform the public about what we do as a regulator, what our role is in funding democracy, and how the funding we provide enables MPs to employ hardworking staff who are dedicated to helping and representing constituents. We have therefore committed to reviewing and improving our publication policy and would welcome views on further steps we might take in relation to publishing our funding of staff.

Question 5b: Do you have any comments about how IPSA can provide more meaningful transparency to staffing funding and how this is used to support MPs' work?

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

47. We have listened to the feedback that the job description items do not adequately represent the types of roles that MPs staff are currently undertaking. To ensure that the job description tasks are relevant for the modern MP's office, we will update the job description items to become less transactional and more

developmental. We will collaborate with offices to understand where changes to the job description items will be helpful. This will help us move closer towards a competency-based approach that can be used by all MPs' offices.

48. Currently we are proposing to retain the 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, and we think the number of possible job titles available for each job role provides appropriate flexibility for offices. However, we would also welcome views on whether the number of job titles should be reduced to improve clarity and consistency.

Question 6a: Do you agree that this approach would ensure that job descriptions would better reflect the reality of working in an MP's office? Are there any other changes that would help to achieve this?

Question 6b: Is there a need to reduce the number of job titles which can be used under each job role?

Longer-term ambition

49. We are also keen to hear views on the longer-term ambition we have to introduce a competency framework for MPs' staff, complemented by a clear pay progression structure, which could include salary spine points. Building on our learning in year one through the development of a new leadership-level role and testing the approach with a few offices, we would consider widening the scope to incorporate more staff. This would help determine whether this approach meets our ambition of staff development and fair pay progression.
50. We would also like to seek views from stakeholders on other pay issues such as whether to introduce an explicit 'London weighting' or alternatively, move to a flatter pay structure by removing the London/Non-London distinction. In considering this point we know that while cost of living is comparatively high in London, there are other locations across the UK that are also comparatively expensive. Therefore, we would also like to hear about whether MPs should be given discretion to award their staff with a high living cost allowance, instead of this only applying to those living and working in London.

Further development in 2027-2029

Issue 7. Towards a competency framework and pay spine points

51. We aim to move towards a competency-based pay and career progression framework in the longer term for all MPs' staff, but we are proposing to pilot the approach with a small number of offices starting with a new leadership role in the first instance, as described above. Moving towards a competency approach more quickly would be a large structural change for both MPs' offices and IPSA to implement and could create instability within offices. We intend to develop this proposal further as we learn more from offices during the pilots. Initially therefore, we are seeking views on a comprehensive competency-based pay and career progression framework as concept and longer-term aim.
52. By competency-based system we mean a framework for career and pay progression, a structured system that links 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 would outline proficiency levels, enabling transparent career pathways. MPs' staff would be assessed, by their employer (the MP) against these competencies, and progression—both in role and pay—would be based on evidence of growth, performance, and readiness for increased responsibility. This approach will

promote fairness, clarity, and alignment between individual development and the goals of the office of each MP.

53. We are conscious that spine point systems are not new in the public sector and, in many settings, there has been a move to phase out arrangements where reaching the top of the scale was linked to length of service, which disadvantages younger people who were less likely to reach higher levels. Therefore, our proposal would be to look towards a spine point system that is 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. If a staff member were recognised by their employer as having demonstrated the required competencies for a pay increase, over a 5-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. Ultimately this would need to be a decision made by the employer, not IPSA.

54. We are keen to hear views on whether a competency-based framework with spine points would assist offices in determining staff progression in terms of career development and pay. We believe this longer-term ambition will provide a clear development ladder for staff and clear expectations from the employer for career and pay progression.

Question 7a. What are your views around IPSA moving towards a broad competency-based pay progression framework for MPs' staff?

Question 7b. What are your views on spine point systems in the context of MPs' staffing?

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

55. We would like to hear views about whether IPSA should retain distinct London and Non-London pay ranges; or alternatively whether there should be single pay range for all staff regardless of location.

56. In recent years, we have 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 the Southeast of England and other large cities. We have also heard staff advocate for fairer treatment in terms of pay between Westminster and constituency staff owing to high living costs and commuting costs.

57. Instead of IPSA determining who is entitled to locality-based pay, we are considering an alternative solution of allowing the MP to exercise discretion about when to provide a 'high-cost area allowance' to their staff. This could reflect, for example, not only where staff live but whether they are required to commute to an office daily. This would be in line with the shift toward greater flexibility as well as accountability for MPs but might also come with risks in relation to unfair or even discriminatory decision-making.

Question 8a. What are your views on locality-based pay ranges?

Question 8b. Should MPs have discretion to provide 'high-cost area allowances' to their staff?

Equality impact assessment

58. In making these proposals we hope to address some of the inequalities that exist because of the current architecture: wide pay ranges which mean similar roles are paid differently, FTE working hours that are not standardised and individuals living in high-cost areas who may be adversely impacted by the strictly defined London/Non-London pay ranges. We do not however want to introduce any new inequalities into the systems we are creating so we would like to hear from our stakeholders about any possible or likely impacts.

Question 9: Are there any areas of possible inequality in the approach we are consulting upon that we should consider? Do you have any views on any other possible equality impacts resulting from the proposals in this consultation?