

Staffing Support for Members of the Senedd

March 2025

This paper provides information on the staffing support made available to Members of the Senedd (Members) by the Independent Remuneration Board of the Senedd (the Board) with comparative information on the staffing support made available to parliamentarians in various other legislatures.

This paper has been produced to support the work of the Board, specifically the Board's review of staffing support for Members which aims to establish the appropriate level of staffing support to be provided to Members of the next Senedd term - the Seventh Senedd.

The paper does not consider the volume and complexity of Members' workload as a basis for consideration of the staffing support requirements of Members of the Seventh Senedd. The volume and complexity of elected members' constituency and parliamentary workload will inevitably vary from Member to Member and is, to an extent, a matter of choice for Members. For example some Members will choose to seek constituency casework via engagement with the public whilst others will choose to focus mostly on their parliamentary work. It is therefore difficult to gauge the volume and complexity of Members' workload currently and how it will change in the Seventh Senedd is unknown. As such this paper is mainly focussed on the level of staffing support currently made available to Members, the use made of this support and the staffing support provided to Members of other legislatures, as a basis for the Board's decisions on the funding to be provided to Members in future for the purpose of employing staff.

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1. Background

1. Members of the Senedd are supported to undertake their Senedd duties by staff with a wide range of specialisms. For example the Senedd Commission provides Members with clerks, researchers, legal advisers, communications specialists and ICT experts to name but a few, to support different aspects of Members' work. This support is focused mainly on the parliamentary business of legislating and scrutinising the Welsh Government's work via committee and plenary meetings, although Commission officials also support other aspects of Members' work.
2. Staffing support is also available to Members and political groups in the Senedd via the Remuneration Board's Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances (the Determination). Each individual Member is provided with a staffing budget to employ staff to support the performance of the Member's Senedd duties and to cover costs associated with the employment of staff.
3. This evidence paper is focused on the staffing support available to Members via the Board's Determination.
4. The Board also provides political groups in the Senedd with staffing support via the Support for Political Parties budget which may be used to pay the salaries and associated costs of staff employed to support political group functions, for example researchers employed for the purpose of developing group policy. Political Group Leaders are the designated employers of staff employed via the Support for Political Parties budget. This budget may also be used by groups for other purposes for example the provision of pastoral care for group members.
5. The amount of funding available to individual Members and Political Group Leaders for the purpose of employing staff is determined by the Remuneration Board and published in its Determination on Members' Pay and Allowances.
6. It is the responsibility of Members and Groups to ensure their staffing costs are affordable within the limits of the financial support determined by the Remuneration Board. Members and Groups must ensure their staffing costs remain affordable over time as staff pay increases from one year to the next, in line with the annual pay progression of staff.
7. Support staff salaries are paid centrally by the Senedd Commission on behalf of Members with the costs charged to Members' staffing budgets.

8. The funding provided to political groups for the purpose of employing staff is calculated on the basis of an overall budget divided amongst all political groups (as defined in the Determination) using a formula set out in Chapter 8 of the Determination. Staff employed via this funding provide support to groups of Members collectively rather than to individual Members. They are paid the same salaries and in the same way as staff employed by individual Members, with the exception that Groups are able to employ a Chief of Staff (the most senior Group staff grade) which is not a role individual Members are able to employ.

2. Staffing Support for individual Members of the Senedd

Evolution of the Staffing budget

9. The following table provides a summary of changes over time to the budget available to individual Members for the purpose of employing staff and the rules pertaining to the use of this budget.

Table 1 – Evolution of the Staffing budget

| Date | Changes Made |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2007 | Members permitted to employ 2.5 full-time equivalents (FTE) from the beginning of the 3rd Senedd. |
| July 2007 | Member's permitted to employ 3 FTEs, one at each of the pay-bands in place at the time. |
| 2011 | <p>Changes introduced following publication of the <u>Fit for Purpose</u> report on the Board's first Determination in 2011:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Members able to employ up to 3 FTEs on any affordable combination of pay bands provided 1 FTE is dedicated to supporting the Member in a research capacity. ▪ Two or more Members permitted to pool parts or all of their staffing budget to strengthen the support available to them. ▪ Members able to transfer part of their staffing budget to their political group. |
| 2016 | <p><u>Determination for the Fifth Senedd</u></p> <p>Introduction of the Senior Advisor post, with the salary set at the same level as the existing Additional Group Support role.</p> |
| 2019 | <p><u>Review of Staffing Support</u></p> <p>Removal of a cap of 111 on the combined contractual weekly hours of all permanently employed staff (equivalent to a maximum of 3 members of staff on 37 hours a week) to provide Members with greater flexibility as to the use of the Allowance.</p> <p>Increased flexibility for Members to vire funds between different budgets.</p> |

| | |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Removal of provision to vire funds from the Members' staffing budget to their political group. |
| 2023 | The quantum of the Members' staffing budget increased to enable Members to employ staff at one each of the maximum salaries paid for the Senior Advisor, Band 1 and Band 2 roles. |

The current staffing budget

10. The amount of funding available to an individual Member for the purpose of employing staff is an accumulation of the highest three pay-points of the three most senior grades within the staff pay and grading framework, set out in Chapters 7 of the Determination. The staff pay and grading framework is determined by the Board and provides Members with a means of classifying roles employed by them according to level of seniority (i.e. pay-bands), with salary ranges and pay-points set out for each pay-band.

Table 2 - The pay and grading framework for Members' staff (2024-25)¹

| Band | Pay Point 1 | Pay Point 2 | Pay Point 3 | Pay Point 4 | Pay Point 5 |
|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Senior Advisor | £40,845 | £42,904 | £45,074 | £47,349 | £49,752 |
| Band 1 | £30,520 | £33,195 | £36,123 | £39,318 | £42,811 |
| Band 2 | £26,153 | £28,704 | £31,520 | £34,169 | £38,039 |
| Band 3 | £23,742 | £25,532 | £27,462 | £29,546 | £31,798 |

11. The Members' staffing budget for 2024-25 is £130,602, an accumulation of the highest pay points of the three highest Bands: Senior Advisor, Band 1 and Band 2 (£49,752, £42,811 and £38,039 respectively). As those salaries increase year on year in line with the index set out in the Board's Determination (the Office for National Statistics' Annual Survey of Household Earnings(ASHE)), so does the quantum of the Members' staffing budget.

12. Members may employ any number of staff on any combination of pay-bands as long as the total cost does not exceed the total of the budget and will not do so in future as staff progress annually through the pay points for their job grade. Members may vire (i.e. transfer) 25 per cent of their Office and Constituency Liaison Fund (£6,403 in 2024/25) to their staffing

¹ To note, Pay Point 1 of Band 3 has been increased to £24,243 in line with the Real Living Wage announced in October 2024

budget as a means of increasing their staffing budget. In 2023/24, seven Members vired an average of £2,035 into their staffing budget.

13. As well as paying for the salaries of the staff employed by them Members must meet other costs associated with being an employer from their staffing budget, for example any overtime payments and travel expenses to be made to staff, where applicable.

14. Some specific costs incurred by Members in the employment of staff are met from central budgets and are not allocated against the Members' staffing budget. For example employers' National Insurance and pension contributions associated with staff salaries, the costs of temporary staffing cover (known as Temporary Staffing Allowance) and the Homeworking Allowance Members may claim on behalf of their staff are paid centrally and not from the Members' staffing budget.

15. See further information in Table 10 below on differences in how the non-salary costs of employing staff are funded in the various UK parliaments.

Members as employers of support staff

16. The employment arrangements for Member support staff which are replicated in some other legislatures (e.g. UK Parliament) are somewhat complex. Whilst the 60 Members of the Senedd are individual employers of the staff appointed by them to support their Senedd duties, the salaries payable to support staff are largely determined by the Board with some limited flexibility for Members to change starting salaries and the rate of salary progression of their staff (within the parameters set by the Board).

17. Staff salaries are administered by the Senedd Commission on behalf of Members with the cost met from Members' staffing budgets, with the Board determining the appropriate level of the staffing budget. The setting of staff salaries largely by the Board rather than Members themselves reflects the need to ensure consistency in the salaries paid for similar roles across all of the 60 Members' offices.

18. The Board provides discretion for Members to employ staff in any combination of roles to meet the Member's own needs or priorities and preferred balance of constituency and parliamentary support.

19. The flexibility provided and the varying approaches and needs of Members has seen a broad range of arrangements for staff employment and utilisation of the staffing budget.² Table 3 below shows significant variance in the number of FTEs employed by Members as at Autumn 2023.

Table 3 – Number of FTEs employed by Members

| No. of FTEs employed | No of Members |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| 0-1 | 0 |
| Fewer than 2 FTE | 2 |
| 2 – 2.5 | 4 |
| >2.5 - 3 | 11 |
| >3 – 3.5 | 29 |
| >3.5 - 4 | 14 |
| Total | 60 |

20. Further information is provided below to illustrate the wide range of staffing support arrangements employed by Members. To note, the figures provided below are based on various datasets compiled at different periods of time. As such the figures reflect a fluctuation over time in the overall number of staff employed by Members collectively. The figures provided should be taken as indicative only and do not necessarily reflect the actual number of staff employed at any one time:

- 238 staff are currently employed across the Members’ offices.³
- There is a mix of full and part-time employment across Members’ offices. The split (inclusive of political group staff) is 130 staff employed full-time and 134 part-time (with 71 of those employed between 2.5 to 19.5 hours and 63 employed between 21-35 hours).⁴

² This data is from Autumn 2023.

³ According to June 2024 data taken from the staffing directory on the Senedd Commission’s intranet

⁴ According to MBS data provided in Autumn 2023.

- 6 members of staff work, on a part-time basis, for more than one Member.⁵

21. The distribution of roles across the pay-bands is as follows (note that data does not show full-time/part-time split):

Table 4 – Distribution of support staff jobs across pay-bands

| Band | Number |
|----------------|---------------|
| Senior Advisor | 24 |
| Band 1 | 69 |
| Band 2 | 88 |
| Band 3 | 57 |
| Total | 238 |

22. At the time of writing the Board intends to replace the current staff pay and grading framework which sets pay levels for job roles according to level of seniority, with a new framework based on the job families model, which sets pay levels according to the type of work undertaken as well as level of seniority. A review by the Board of the types of work undertaken by support staff identified the following four principal roles occupied by staff – management and administration; casework, communications, policy and research.

23. This provides an interesting model to aid understanding of the distribution and type of roles currently employed across Members’ offices. The following breakdown of support staff roles is based an analysis of job titles and assumptions on the primary focus of each role. As such this breakdown is indicative only.⁶

Table 5 – Distribution of current staff between job families

| Job Family | Number of Employees |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Management and Administration | 59 |
| Casework | 56 |
| Communications | 64 |
| Policy and Research | 66 |
| Total | 245 |

⁵ Ibid

⁶ This is indicative only as allocation to a job family is based on job title only and not an understanding of the exact nature of each role. It has also not been possible to identify which roles are part-time.

Table 6 – number of Members employing at least one member of staff in the specified job families⁷

| Job Family | Number of Members employing at least one member of staff in the specified family |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Casework | 46 |
| Communications | 44 |
| Management and Administration | 44 |
| Policy and Research | 51 |

24. To aid understanding of the figures provided in the table above, 46 Members employ at least one caseworker, 44 Members employ at least one communications specialist etc.

25. Again using the job titles of Members' staff as provided on the Senedd Commission's staffing directory as an indication of the job families into which those jobs would fall (for illustrative purposes only) the following breakdown of the distribution of job types employed by Members may be assumed:

- 20 Members employ at least one member of staff in each of the 4 job families;
- 26 Members employ at least one member of staff in 3 of the job families;
- 13 Members employ at least one member of staff employed in 2 of the job families;
- 1 Member has staff employed in 1 job family only.

26. In terms of the combinations of types of roles employed by Members the distribution is broadly even. For example, 38 Members employ at least one member of staff in both a casework role and a policy and research role. The same number of Members employ at least one member of staff in both a policy & research role and management & administration role. 36 Members employ at least one member of staff in both a communications role and a policy and research role etc.

⁷ This is indicative only as allocation to a job family is based on job title only and not an understanding of the exact nature of each role. It has also not been possible to identify which roles are part-time.

Members' staffing expenditure

27. Members' expenditure on staffing support is recorded by the Senedd Commission (MBS) and is published on the Senedd's website. The proportions of their staffing budget spent by Members during the first two full financial years of the current Senedd is set out in the tables below:

Table 7 - Proportion of spend against MSs' Staffing Allowance 2022-23

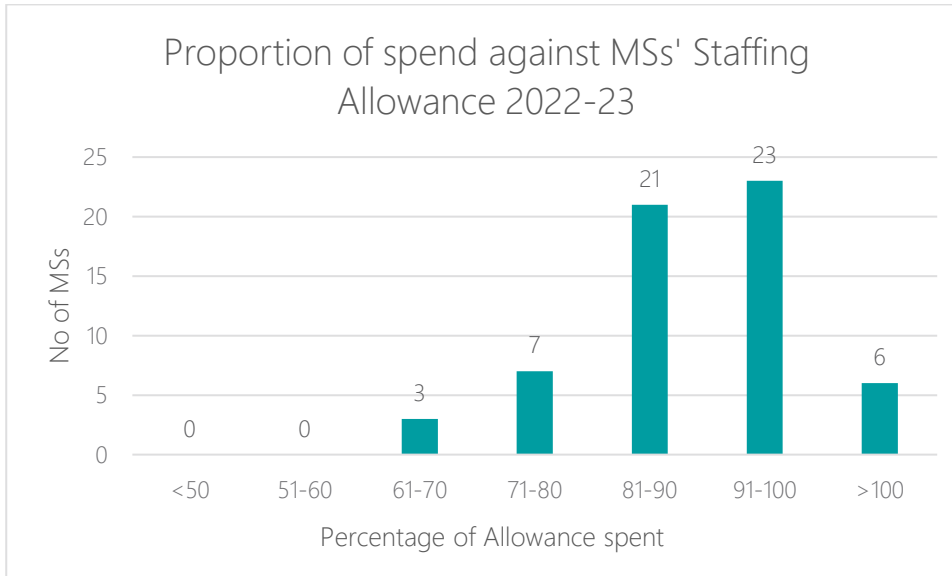
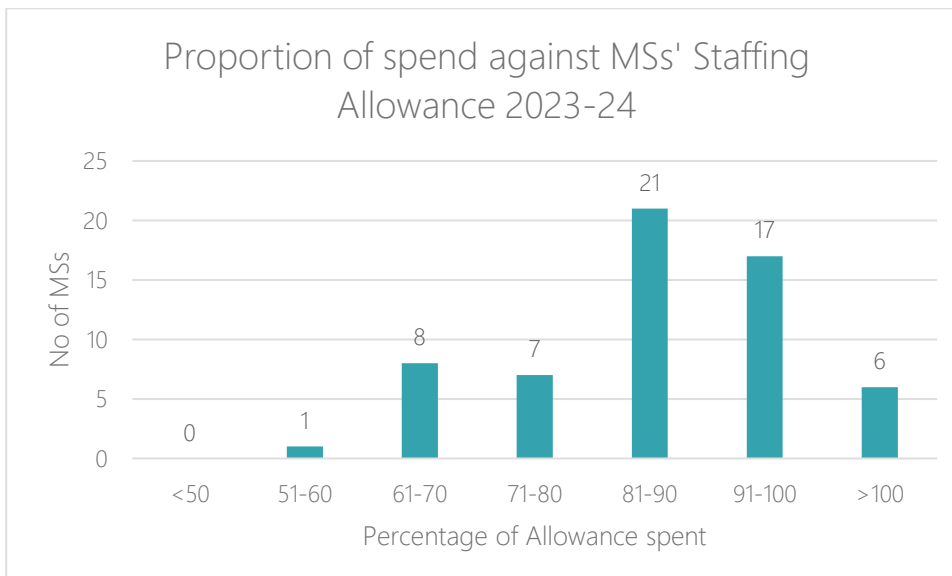


Table 8 - Proportion of spend against MSs' Staffing Allowance 2023-24



28. As shown above, in the first full financial year of the current Senedd one-sixth of Members spent 80 per cent or less of their staffing budget. Taking into consideration that staff salaries increase from one year to the next it is interesting to note that the proportion of Members who

spent 80 per cent or less of their Staffing Allowance increased from one-sixth in 2022-23 to just over a quarter in 2023-24. The reasons for this are unknown. Possible reasons include a higher number of staff vacancies in the first financial year than in the second, or lower overtime costs in the second financial year than in the first.

29. In the first two full financial years of the current Senedd (2022-23 and 2023-24) just over a third of Members spent 81-90 per cent of their staffing budget.

30. The number of Members who spent between 91-100 per cent of their staffing budget remained relatively consistent over both financial years (23 and 17 Members respectively).

31. In both financial years 6 Members exceeded the upper limit of their staffing budget and needed to transfer funds from their Office and Constituent Liaison budget to cover their overspends.

3. Staffing Support for members of other legislatures

32. The Members’ staffing budget for 2024-25 is £130,602, an accumulation of the highest Pay Points in each of the three highest pay bands - Senior Advisor, Band 1 and Band 2 (£49,752, £42,811 and £38,039 respectively). As noted above Members may employ any number of staff and any combination of roles within the limits of their staffing budget.

33. The table below compares the staffing budget available to individual Members of the Senedd with the staffing budgets available to members of the UK and Scottish Parliaments and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Table 9 – Total staffing budgets of Members of various UK legislatures

| 2024-25 | UK Parliament | Scottish Parliament | Northern Ireland Assembly | Senedd Cymru |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| Staffing Allowance* | £250,820 | £156,900 | £90,900 | £130,602 |
| *Staff pension and National Insurance contributions paid from the staffing budgets of Members of Parliament and Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly, but paid centrally in the Senedd and Scottish Parliament. The staffing budgets of members of the Senedd and Scottish Parliament shown in this table have therefore been included to account for pension and NI contributions, for comparison. | Non-London Area MP £268,550 London Area MP | *c£192,828 | | *c£159,877 |

34. The staffing budgets of members of the various legislatures shown above are not directly comparable for a number of reasons. As shown in the table below different costs are met from the staffing budgets in each legislature, reflecting the fact that the nature and level of staffing support provided centrally to members of these legislatures (rather than via their staffing budgets) varies significantly.

Table 10 – costs met from staffing budgets of Members of various UK legislatures

| Costs paid from the Staffing Allowance | UK Parliament | Scottish Parliament | Northern Ireland Assembly | Senedd Cymru |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Staff salaries (inc temporary staff) | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Employer's NI and pensions contributions | √ | X | √ | X (paid centrally) |
| Overtime payments | √ | √ | MLA's may not employ staff for more than 37 hours per week. | √ |
| Homeworking Allowance | √ (Allowance available only to fully home-based staff) | Allowance not available | √ | X (paid centrally) |
| Cost of pooled staffing services | √ | √ (MSPs may apply for additional funding where making a redundancy payments would cause the limit of their Allowance to be exceeded) | Pooled staffing services are not referenced in the Determination | Pooled staffing services are not referenced in the Determination |
| Bought-in services e.g. consultants | √ | No mention of this cost in the Scheme. Agency staff may be paid from the | √ (temp agency workers) | X (Members may pay for bought-in policy / research/communications services via a different budget) |

| | | Staff Cost Provision. | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Reward and recognition payments to staff | √ | No mention of this cost in the Scheme. | No mention of this cost in the Determination. | Not permitted. |
| Staff health and welfare costs e.g. eye tests | √ | No mention of this in the Scheme. | No mention of this in the Determination. | Some such costs, but not all, are met from the Members' staffing budget |
| Staff training costs | √ | √ | √ (up to a maximum of £1,500 per annum). | Training is provided directly by the Senedd Commission. |
| Redundancy costs | √ (but not those arising from an MPs' loss of office) | √ | √ | Those arising from an office restructure during the Senedd only and not the cost of redundancies due to any other circumstances |
| Virement into Staffing Budget from other budgets | X | X | X | √ Up to 25 per cent of their Office and Constituency Liaison Fund (£6,403 in 2024/25) can be vired to their staffing budget |

35. For the same reasons it would be unfair to make direct comparisons between the staffing budget of Members of the Senedd and those made available to members of legislatures outside of the UK. For example, as of 1 January 2024 Members of the European Parliament have a monthly staffing budget of €29,557 at their disposal meaning an annual budget of €354,684 (£296,658). However this figure is not directly comparable with the staffing budget of Members of the Senedd as the support provided centrally to members of each legislature and the costs to be met from their staffing budgets vary.