

Additional Support for Members: UK Legislatures Comparison

January 2025

- 1. This evidence paper considers different approaches to providing additional support to disabled Members or Members with childcare or other caring responsibilities, drawing on evidence from across the UK legislatures.**
2. This paper provides an overview of the additional support provided to members across the four UK legislatures, and forms part of the evidence base for the Remuneration Board's review of the Determination, in particular the provisions set out in Chapter 3A 'Additional Support' and other relevant provisions.
3. Chapter 3A of the Determination sets out a number of provisions which seek to ensure that no Member is "unreasonably disadvantaged as a result of their specific needs or circumstances." In addition to the provisions in Chapter 3A, an uplift to Residential Accommodation Expenditure (RAE) is available to qualifying Members, which is detailed in paragraph 4.4.3 (h) of the Determination. Members with partners or children are also entitled to claim costs of 12 single journeys in each year for members of their families, detailed in paragraph 5.18 of the Determination. These provisions are summarised below.
4. Since Chapter 3A was introduced at the start of the Sixth Senedd, Senedd business and Members' ways of working have changed dramatically. Remote and hybrid working has become commonplace and is supported by the Senedd; this means that Members have greater flexibility to better balance or respond to the varied demands of Senedd business and their constituency commitments, as well as their personal needs or family circumstances.
5. It should be noted however that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's 'Effective and Inclusive Parliament Report' (2022) included a 'RAG audit' which concluded the Senedd was

red for 'childcare and child-friendly provisions' and amber for 'maternity and parental leave'¹. The evidence assessed (and whether the Determination was included as part of the review) is unclear and the conclusions may relate in part to the absence of a creche in the Senedd and limited local accessibility of childcare provision.

6. It is important to note that the functions of the Remuneration Board related only to the provision of salaries and allowances and whilst the Determination's provisions can help to meet some of the needs of Members, the Senedd and Senedd Commission play a crucial role in ensuring business arrangements are 'family-friendly', that the parliamentary estate and services are accessible and meet Members' and staff needs and that wider facilities are considered.

7. The Senedd Commission continues to plan for the Seventh Senedd and the Future Senedd Committee is currently considering *'Solutions to barriers (real and perceived) which may, or have the potential to, impede the Senedd's ability to represent people of all backgrounds, life experiences, preferences and beliefs, including consideration of the draft and final diversity and inclusion guidance for political parties'*.

8. This evidence paper summarises and compares the provisions and support through the Determination only, rather than those provided by the Senedd or Senedd Commission.

¹ <https://www.uk-cpa.org/media/4661/effective-and-inclusive-parliaments-final.pdf>

Support relating to Disabilities

Senedd Provisions (provided through the Determination)

- 9.** Support under section 3A may be claimed by any Member for any additional expenses incurred in order to enable the performance of that Member's duties, which reasonably arise due to health conditions or impairments.
- 10.** These expenses may relate to a Member's health or impairments, a member of staff's health or impairments, or to facilitate engagement with disabled constituents.
- 11.** There is no limit on the amount that can be claimed.
- 12.** Furthermore, exceptional expense provisions (paragraph section 2.4) also provide wider flexibility to respond to any Members' specific needs, should these not be met through Chapter 3A.
- 13.** Members are also provided with an Office and Constituent Liaison Fund, which may be used to set up a constituency office. Paragraph 6A.1.3 of the Determination states that 'offices should be accessible spaces for all those who need to use them.' Members should therefore make an assessment of the accessibility of their offices before taking out leases and may also claim for reasonable adjustments to offices where appropriate.

UK Parliament Provisions

- 14.** The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) Scheme of MPs' Staffing and Business Costs makes provisions for support for Members with caring responsibilities, disability and parental leave.²
- 15.** MPs may claim for 'Disability assistance' costs incurred by providing reasonable adjustments for disabled people including themselves, staff members, volunteers, job applicants or constituents visiting the MP's office or surgery.
- 16.** Disability assistance may be claimed to meet the costs of any workplace adjustments including, staff and associated costs; IT and other specialist equipment; office furniture; adjustments to office premises or accommodation; costs of securing larger office premises or

² researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9995/CBP-9995.pdf

accommodation; and additional travel costs (including for carers or support staff where necessary).

17. Where the cost of the reasonable adjustment(s) is known, IPSA will open a capped budget for that amount. Where the cost is unknown or ongoing, IPSA will open an uncapped budget.³

Scottish Parliament Provisions

18. A member who is disabled may apply to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body (SPCB) for reimbursement of expenses incurred in respect of additional resources reasonably required for the performance of that member's parliamentary duties.

19. In selecting premises for a local parliamentary office a member must ensure the premises are accessible or able to be made accessible. A member may apply to the SPCB for reimbursement of expenses incurred by the member in respect of:

20. making reasonable adjustments to the office to accommodate a disabled member of staff and/or facilitating access for disabled members of the public

- providing equipment and/or parking spaces for disabled persons; or

21. (c) facilitating meetings involving disabled persons by hiring (on an occasional basis) alternative meeting premises.

Northern Ireland Assembly Provisions

22. Members may recover "expenses incurred which are wholly and necessarily attributable to a disability the Member has".⁴

23. "No expense may be recovered unless there is satisfactory evidence, from a medical practitioner specialising in occupational health nominated by the Commission, that the expense is cost effective and is wholly and necessarily attributable to a disability the member has"

24. Any adjustments to the constituency office come from the Member's office budget

³ [Disability Assistance funding](#)

⁴ [assembly-members-salaries-and-expenses-determination-northern-ireland-2016.pdf](#)

Support for Members with Childcare and Other Caring Responsibilities

Senedd Provisions (provided through the Determination)

25. A Member may claim the reimbursement of costs up to a maximum of £340 per month for the care of their children or adult dependents, where such care is required for a member to continue to perform their duties.

26. Claims can only be made for costs incurred during the Senedd's sitting weeks and outside of its usual working hours as set out in Standing Order 11.10 (9am – 6pm on working days).⁵

27. Claims can be made in respect of any child under 16 years old, and an adult dependent, which is defined as:

a. a spouse, partner or parent or other person who lives in the same household as the Member (otherwise than by reason of being an employee, tenant, lodger or boarder), or

b. a person who reasonably relies on the Member for their care or to make arrangements for their care

28. Members may claim the reimbursement of the costs of care provided by registered care providers. The Members' Business Support Team is available to provide advice to Members on eligibility for this allowance.

29. Furthermore, the Determination provides for some family travel, and Members to claim for 12 single journeys by public transport made by their partner and/or any child under the age of 18, between the Senedd (defined as Cardiff Area) and their constituency or region or their main home.

30. Under paragraph 5.19.1 a Member's partner (or child if under the age of 18), can travel by car as an alternative to public transport. Such claims have to be made separately from Members' own car travel, and they are counted against a limit of 12 single journeys.

⁵ [Standing Orders of the Welsh Parliament](#)

UK Parliament Provisions

31. Members of Parliament are not provided with specific budget for the reimbursement of childcare or dependent care support. However, there are indirect forms of support, such as tax-efficient nursery schemes and contingency applications under exceptional circumstances.

32. The House of Commons Nursery provides care services for parliamentary pass holders, which offers services from 8AM-6PM throughout the working week.⁶ However, it should be noted that claims for the service cannot be recovered through IPSA's Scheme of MPs' Staffing and Business Costs.⁷

Scottish Parliament Provisions

The Members Expenses Scheme makes provision for additional accommodation support for Members with caring responsibility and disability support. Additionally, an onsite crèche facility is available for 3-days of the week, where members can leave children under five for up to four hours per day free of charge.⁸

Northern Ireland Assembly Provisions

There are no apparent child care or dependent care provisions listed within the Determination or on the Northern Ireland Assembly website.

⁶ Parliamentary Creche Criteria

⁷ **Westminster Nursery: Taxpayers fork out £500k for MPs' childcare as Westminster nursery racks up bill due to home working**

⁸ Crèche | Scottish Parliament Website [Accessed 23.01.25]

Support for Members on Parental Leave

Senedd Provisions (provided through the Determination)

33. Parental leave means maternity leave, paternity leave or adoption leave. During the course of such leave, the Member will remain on their full salary including any additional office holder salary to which they are entitled.

34. Maternity and paternity leave may be taken prior to the birth of a child, or to care for an infant child (under 12 months old). Adoption leave may be taken to care an adopted child within the first 12 months following adoption. **Members receive their full pay for the period of parental leave.**

35. Members are also entitled to claim for the **reimbursement of reasonable costs of either an additional member of staff** or other additional resource for a total duration of up to 12 months, to allow for the continuity in the performance of the Member's duties not related to formal Senedd business.

36. Claims under this provision must be accompanied by relevant documentation to evidence the leave being taken, e.g. MATB1 form for maternity or paternity leave and Matching Certificate for adoption leave.

UK Parliament Provisions

37. MPs who take time off after the birth or adoption of a child are **eligible for funding to provide cover for their office during their absence** (normally where this is longer than three months). **During their parental leave MPs are paid their full salary.**⁹

38. This is paid from the MP parental leave and absence budget, subject to a maximum of £68,847.¹⁰ Funding for cover will normally be provided for a maximum period of 7 months for the biological parent or primary adopter. Longer periods can be agreed on a case-by-case basis.

⁹ <https://www.ipsaonline.org.uk/guidance/leave-and-holidays> [Accessed 20.06.24]

¹⁰ Figures taken from the 2024/25 Scheme

39. Evidence must be provided as set out in guidance.

Scottish Parliament Provisions

40. Statutory and contractual entitlements are only available to employees. Scottish Ministers and MSPs, as office holders, are not employees and do not automatically qualify for any equivalent statutory leave and pay entitlements. Nor is their entitlement to pay and benefits governed by a contract of employment. Decisions about granting and the duration of the equivalent of formal maternity leave are entirely at the discretion of the First Minister, following discussions with the individual Cabinet Secretary or Minister.¹¹

Northern Ireland Assembly Provisions

41. Entitlement to statutory maternity leave and pay; paternity leave and pay; adoption leave and pay; shared parental leave and pay and parental leave is governed by the statutory provisions for the time being in force in Northern Ireland.

42. A Northern Ireland Assembly Member is also entitled to an additional allowance during a period of maternity leave, adoption leave or shared parental leave to employ, or engage via a temporary work agency, a person to assist them with certain of their functions as a member. The maximum cost recoverable is £25,000 and costs cannot be recovered for a period exceeding six months from the date of commencement of 'parental leave'.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.scot/news/cabinet-secretary-for-wellbeing-economy-net-zero-and-energy-announces-pregnancy/>

Additional Accommodation Costs

43. Each of the four UK legislatures provides for varying levels of overnight accommodation for Members when undertaking Members' duties and attending the legislative building. The following section summaries the 'additional accommodation' provision available to disabled Members or Members with dependents.

Senedd Provisions (provided through the Determination)

44. Subject to approval of a business case, Members who can demonstrate having caring responsibilities for a dependant who is usually resident with them in the Cardiff area may claim an additional £1,735 a year (£144.58 per month) to cover the higher cost of suitable accommodation.¹² This equates to a 15% uplift on the basic accommodation rate for outer area Members.¹³

45. Outer area Members with caring responsibilities would be able to claim up to £13,495 per year in total (£1124.58 per month), for accommodation in Cardiff.

46. Additional support, through Chapter 3A or the exceptional expenses provisions (in paragraph 2.4 of the Determination) are available to Members with health conditions or impairments. There is no limit on the amount that can be claimed under this provision. Each claim is be considered on a case by case basis.

UK Parliament Provisions

Members with caring responsibilities can claim additional budgets: eligibility depends on circumstances. In 2024-25, the additional budget limit is £6,680 per dependant. A maximum limit of three "uplifts" has been in place since April 2017.¹⁴

Disability assistance may also be claimed to meet the costs of adjustments to accommodation, or the costs of securing larger accommodation.¹⁵

¹² Figures from 2024-25 Determination

¹³ A separate briefing note is available that looks at the evolution of the RAE uplift and compares to provisions in the IPSA Scheme of MPs Staffing and Business Costs [Briefing.RAE.Outer.Area.and.Caring.Element.Dec.2023.docx](#)

¹⁴ [CBP-9995.pdf](#)

¹⁵ [IPSA – The Scheme of MPs' Staffing and Business Costs 2024-25](#)

47. The level of accommodation support available to MSPs is determined by three categories based on the location of their main residence in relation to Edinburgh. Typically, only MSPs representing constituencies in Group Three (those deemed beyond a reasonable commuting distance) are eligible to claim reimbursement for leased accommodation in Edinburgh.¹⁶

48. A disabled Member or a Member with caring responsibilities for dependents whose main residence is in Group Two (constituencies considered to be within a reasonable commuting distance) may apply for reimbursement of leased accommodation costs under the same provisions available to Group Three Members. The SPCB may approve such an application in exceptional circumstances.

49. There is no uplift to the budget for those with caring responsibilities. 2024-25 rates for leased accommodation in Edinburgh is £20,700.¹⁷

Northern Ireland Assembly

50. The Determination for the Northern Ireland Assembly provides for limited overnight accommodation for Members generally, and they may recover the costs of overnight accommodation if:

- a sitting of the Assembly continues beyond 10:00pm
- the member is present at that sitting, and
- the member stays in overnight accommodation following the end of that sitting.

51. The Determination however does not detail any provisions for additional accommodation support for disabled Members or those with caring responsibilities.

¹⁶ [Reimbursement of Members' Expenses Scheme](#)

¹⁷ Ibid.

Annex A: Provision Comparison Table (2024-25)

Support For	Legislature			
	Senedd	UK Parliament	Scottish Parliament	NI Assembly
Disabilities	Section 3A covers unlimited claims for health or impairment related expenses for MSs, staff, or engaging disabled constituents. There is no limit on the amount that can be claimed. Members may also claim through exceptional expenses inf necessary.	The IPSA Scheme supports MPs with caring, disability, and parental leave costs. MPs can claim for reasonable adjustments for disabled individuals, including themselves, staff, and visitors. Budgets are capped if costs are known, uncapped if ongoing or unknown.	Disabled members may seek SPCB reimbursement for extra resources needed for their duties. MSPs must ensure local offices are accessible or adaptable, with expenses reimbursable for adjustments, equipment, parking, or alternative meeting venues for disabled individuals.	Members can recover disability-related expenses if deemed necessary and cost-effective by a Commission-nominated occupational health specialist. Office adjustments are funded from the Member’s office budget.
Childcare and other Caring Responsibilities	MSs can claim up to £340/month for childcare or adult dependent care during Senedd sitting weeks outside 9am - 6pm. Members can claim for 12 single journeys by public transport made by their partner and/or any child under the age of 18, between the Senedd (defined as Cardiff	MPs are not able to claim reimbursement of childcare or adult dependent care costs. A crèche facility (subject to fees) is available to parliamentary pass holders at the House of Commons Nursery, which operates from 08:00-18:00, Monday to Friday and is open.	MSPs are not able to claim reimbursement of childcare or adult dependent care costs. A free crèche facility is available for 3-days of the week, where members can leave children under 5 for up to four hours.	There are no provisions listed within the Determination or on the Northern Ireland Assembly website.

	Area) and their constituency or region or their main home.			
Parental Leave	<p>Parental leave includes maternity, paternity, and adoption leave, with Members retaining their full salary during leave.</p> <p>MSs may claim costs for additional staff or resources for up to 12 months to ensure non-parliamentary duties continue.</p>	<p>MPs on parental leave after a birth or adoption receive full salary.</p> <p>MPs may also claim up to £68,847 for office cover, typically for up to 7 months. Longer cover periods require approval and must be supported by evidence per guidelines.</p>	<p>Members meeting eligibility criteria are entitled to statutory and enhanced contractual parental leave and pay. MSPs, as officeholders, are not employees and do not automatically qualify for statutory or contractual leave and pay entitlements.</p>	<p>The Determination includes support for parental leave responsibilities, covering maternity, paternity, adoption, and shared parental leave.</p> <p>MLAs may claim up to £25,000 for a maximum period of up to six months for additional staffing support.</p>

<p>Accommodation Allowances</p>	<p>Members with caring responsibilities for a dependant living with them in Cardiff may claim an extra £1,735 accommodation costs annually.</p> <p>Additional allowances are available to disabled Members.</p>	<p>MPs can claim an additional £6,680 per dependant (up to 3) to increase their accommodation budget for larger or suitable housing.</p> <p>Additional allowances are available to disabled Members.</p>	<p>MSPs' accommodation support depends on their constituency group, with Group Three (beyond commuting distance) typically eligible for leased accommodation in Edinburgh.</p> <p>Disabled Members or those with caring responsibilities in Group Two (commuting distance) may apply for the same support under exceptional circumstances, subject to SPCB approval.</p>	<p>The Determination does not detail any provisions for additional accommodation support for disabled Members or those with caring responsibilities</p>
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