MPs' Staff Survey 2026

Annual Survey of MPs' Staff

June 2026

Findings from the annual survey of MPs' staff in Westminster and constituencies

WELL-BEING
Supporting good mental health and well-being

WORKLOAD & RETENTION
Managing demand and supporting sustainable workplaces

SAFETY & SECURITY
Ensuring safe and respectful work environments

Prepared for the
MPs Staff Wellness Working Group (WWG)

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MPs' Staff Survey 2026 – Report by Dr Ashley Weinberg

The Speaker's Conference 2022-2023 that sought to improve the working conditions of MPs' staff has clearly had a positive impact. The support and desire of staff, office managers and MPs to help their teams is again evident in the findings from across so many staff and offices. However, as organisations are aware, 'Well-being is never over'. Good practice among MPs and office managers is the experience of the majority. However, there remains a minority of workplaces characterised by toxic behaviour that demand clearer intervention from the House. Added to this, the exposure of between two-thirds to over three-quarters of staff to discriminatory language and threats from the public, provides an imperative for ensuring both psychologically and physically safe work environments. The majority of staff report feeling safe and much has been achieved in providing suitable premises, however this leaves a minority still vulnerable.

Parliamentary services may feel their remit restricts direct intervention, however the clear guidance from the Health and Safety Executive on maintaining psychologically and physically safe work environments pertains to all UK workplaces and MPs' offices are not exempt. The onus remain on Parliament to find a way to actively ensure effective standards of human resource practice, that are expected of other UK workplaces, within the employment relationships of MPs. Failure to do so, risks the potential for damage to the reputation of Parliament as well as to politics more generally.

The increase in training for MPs' staff is welcomed, however there remain clear gaps in the breadth and depth of provision of training that can be remedied by considerable upscaling of what is on offer. This may include making effective use of good quality online as well as much-increased in-person delivery, drawing on the experience of willing and able past practitioners in MPs' offices, in addition to current provision. The role of MMSST is clearly important and would benefit from a greatly enhanced remit that places their services at the heart of what is on offer across all MPs' offices. MPs' staff would find their working lives improved by far greater access to bespoke rather than generalised training that serves both longer-standing as well as new jobholders. Disparities between the rights of access to services and the parliamentary estate for constituency and Westminster-based staff continue and require further redress.

Workloads are a particular concern, not simply as a facet of many working lives, but for the psychological and physical impact of excessive demands over time which predict poor health, presenteeism, absenteeism and continuing turnover of MPs' staff. The results of this year's survey show large increases in the volume of work. The message from these findings for IPSA is clear – increases in staffing provision are not only welcome, but essential for safe maintenance of what is now expected of MPs' teams.

The Speaker's Conference helped to shine a light on what was needed three years ago and its positive intent both requires and deserves reinforcement, or the institution of

Parliament risks becoming the organisational equivalent of the individual in this observation by a staff member: 'The MP is a good [person], however, s/he really does not understand what the front line service of their office is like'. Without this continued understanding, democratic representation in the UK is all the poorer.

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Recommendations: Funding, training, retention, physical and psychological safety

Funding

1. Dissatisfaction with pay is at a five-year high (50% rarely feel this is commensurate with their skills). A review of the offer to staff, including funding for pay is recommended.

2. Increases in workload and working hours were reported across the survey and point to the need for more resourcing/posts to support the work being carried out. At present, these are taking a toll on the mental health of staff due to excessive hours and concerning practices that represent an intrusion of work into the private time of staff with its commensurate toll on their relationships. The House Administration Committee Health and Wellbeing Inquiry report (18th May) has already acknowledged the need to take reasonable steps to manage the impact of the job on the lives of MPs.

3. Reports of a 'tsunami' of casework are frequent and offices are struggling to cope with constituents' demands – increased funding for more caseworker posts would make a big difference to helping offices serve their area. Vitally, there is a need to set clear expectations and to ensure access to sources of support for all

staff working in a caseworker role, as well as communicating with the public about what constitutes appropriate referrals and waiting times.

4. Work phones should be provided to staff so they can better manage their work-life boundaries and are relieved of associated expenses.

5. Earlier announcements by IPSA of budgets was suggested by some office managers to help relieve pressure and help in planning ahead.

6. A clear approach to travel expenses that support movement and collaborative working across sites will promote greater integration and in-person management; this could incorporate ensuring a user-friendly interface for budgeting and processing expenses while mitigation of costs of long-distance travel into London by staff on minimum wages will aid retention.

7. Parliament can afford to be bolder about its purpose in supporting the needs of constituents through an augmented funding model. The continuing work of IPSA, e.g. through its innovation of a citizenship assembly, is important to expand upon in order to ensure there is far wider awareness by, and engagement of, the public in the vital work carried out by MPs and MPs' staff on their behalf. Ideally, there should be citizenship assemblies in every constituency.

Training and retention

8. Well over half of staff feel Parliament could do more to support their job role. The reduced proportion of colleagues recognising the important role played by MMSST and IPSA and awareness of what is on offer to staff is concerning. Therefore, a) significantly increased efforts to publicise where and how staff may obtain advice, training and support – as well as via their office management – and in tandem with b) increased resource for MMSST and other parliamentary and HR services will help ensure effective and accessible provision of support, including c) differentiation of training provision to ensure the needs of longer-serving, as well as newer staff, are catered for.

9. Opportunities to gain qualifications/training in skills needed for the job were seen 'rarely' or 'never' by 28% of respondents. This finding suggests a considerable increase in the opportunities on offer for training is required. This may be achieved by both online access so staff may decide (as and when) they need it, reflecting up to date approaches to accessing learning, **as well as** in-person opportunities in (and as demand requires) away from Westminster.

10. Automatic registration of staff for training and recognised qualifications for their job role should become standard.

11. 71% of constituency staff 'sometimes, rarely or never' feel part of the parliamentary community. Given the experience and perceptions of (two-thirds of) constituency staff that they continue to lack parity with Westminster colleagues, a) increased outreach and proactive approaches by training and HR services as well as b) resolving obstructions of access to passes for use on the Estate and c) ensuring equal access to healthcare provision such as flu jabs and office equipment supporting reasonable adjustments, will enhance engagement of constituency office staff and encourage a more inclusive culture.

12. The rise in contact with staff at unsociable hours may be combated by drawing up communications guidelines that actively discourage sending email/WhatsApp/Teams etc outside of working hours or exceptional situations, e.g. not in the evenings or at weekends. Technology permits the scheduling of messages for those needing to set messages up in order to send them during the working day.

13. Remote working guidance available to all staff- and the flexibility to do so for at least part of the week – will support many needing time and space to manage their workloads and work efficiently in their role, including staff who are navigating demanding family/non-work circumstances and neurodivergence.

14. Training for staff in how to handle intimidatory physical and psychological threats should be compulsory

15. Fears for job security, three years before the next scheduled General Election, are evident in almost half of responses to this year's survey. It will help to raise awareness (from the beginning of their employment) of all the House offers in supporting staff a) in the event of their MP losing their seat and b) in seeking new work and enhancing their employability skills. This would fit with efforts to address high levels of turnover, well before the prospect of a General Election.

16. Clear guidance to all MPs on appropriate use of probationary periods and short- and fixed-term contracts.

17. Universal awareness of the needs of staff living with neurodivergence and physical disabilities can help to ensure appropriate support and consideration of reasonable working adjustments.

18. With 42% of staff feeling the job is negatively affecting their well-being and 33% feeling like leaving their job, there is a clear need to address the issues raised so far. Exit interviews for staff who leave their roles should be routine and turnover statistics made available and reviewed regularly by relevant HR and Well-being services. This will help highlight local as well as more general issues and with

due diligence prevent high levels of turnover, which are carrying associated costs for individuals, offices and associated budgets where recruitment and training for replacements are required.

19. Unreasonably high workloads and lack of availability of training opportunities detract from the capacity of staff to conduct their roles. 'Psychological sustainability' for staff must become a paramount priority for Parliament and requires the continued direct input of the Speaker whose conference has helped generate momentum for progress in improving the working conditions of staff. Relevant actions could include working with campaign organisations to improve their method of contact and reduce demands on offices.

20. Given the ongoing costs of resourcing training and also staff turnover, there should be proactive consideration of how experienced former staff members (e.g. whose MPs have lost their seats) can contribute to training and support functions on offer to MPs' staff.

Physical and psychological safety of staff

21. With over half of staff avoiding mention of their job to people outside Westminster and two-thirds recognising the negative impact of party politics, there are clear implications for perceptions of both psychological and physical safety. The need for this is further underlined by reports of regular exposure of staff to challenging, disturbing and violent behaviours and verbal intimidation. A zero-tolerance approach to abuse of staff across all offices is required akin to those already widely adopted in the NHS as well as improved screening to root out abusive calls.

22. Staff concerns for personal safety and in receiving negative communications and unreasonable demands from the public indicate the need for a) steps to support and enhance continuing improvements to safety, as well as b) make clear within localities what services an MP's office can offer.

23. 80% of staff felt the House should ensure compliance of MPs with safety measures – this would help to: a) address uncertainty about safety, b) highlight the minority of offices where unsafe working practices are frequent and c) encourage improved uptake of safe working practices (in addition to physical safety) such as a lone worker policy, and d) reduce unsafe approaches, such as an 'open door' constituency policy and publication of personal contact details.

24. Security arrangements should routinely extend to MPs' staff 'as though the MP is present'. The urgent need for this provision is emphasised by the role of staff members already acting as a proxy for their MP.

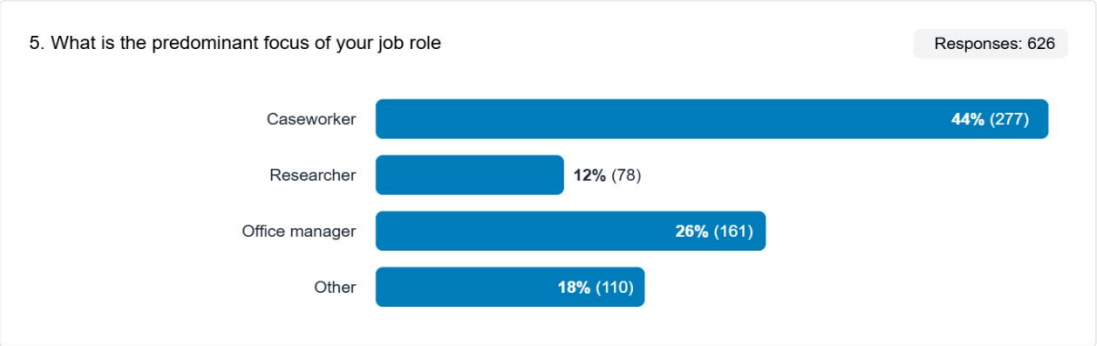
25. Annual inspections of constituency offices should include provision (and reporting in between inspections) of unsanitary as well as unsafe working environments.

26. Analyses show clear links between lack of exposure to interventions to improve working conditions and poor psychological health. Although this situation applies to a minority of staff, it is nonetheless important, as it appears there are negative effects of suboptimal working practices on staff who may also be vulnerable to poor mental well-being as a result of these experiences. Lack of proactive steps to address this situation risks allegations that some staff are being 'left behind'.

Methodology

The 2026 survey was the fifth in consecutive years and opened from 6th January – 20th March. It incorporated sections assessing sources of pressure in political work, mental well-being (General Health Questionnaire-12 item version), constituency workplaces, safety and safeguarding, as well as training, support and perceptions from newer staff.

- 627 colleagues took party in the fifth annual survey, which is 122 more than in the fourth annual survey of 2024-5
- 371 (59%) participants are new to the survey
- Of the 268 participating previously, 149 had done so before the General Election
- 441 (70%) of respondents are based in constituency offices (as previously)
- 433 (69%) of respondents are women (similar to previously)
- 275 (44%) of respondents are aged 18-35, 122 (19%) are aged 45-55
- 4.5 years was the average length of service of participants in the survey
- This is the first year in which the survey asked about job role – almost half of respondents are caseworkers and one quarter are office managers (see Figure 5 below):



Results

The following sections consider the responses of MPs' staff to measures probing their mental well-being, as well as potential sources of support or challenge that contribute to experiences of psychological health. Prevalence figures below indicate the proportion of respondents to the survey who fulfil the threshold for psychological distress, as assessed using the General Health Questionnaire. These findings are followed by foci on safety, physical working conditions and safeguarding in constituencies, newer staff and training and support.

Mental well-being of MPs' staff

Table 1 – Prevalence of psychological distress across 5 annual surveys of MPs' staff

Year	2021	2022-3	2023-4	2024-5a	2024-5b	2026
GHQ high scores (4 or more)	49.8%	41.9%	45.9%	36.7%	45.7%	**50.9%**
Sample sizes	217	315	357	346	92	**627**

Note: 2024a represents data from new responders who had not previously taken part in the survey; 2024b represents data from previous responders in the 2023 survey

The 2026 survey has attracted almost three times the number of staff responding to the survey compared to when these began in 2021. The overall prevalence of psychological distress appears slightly higher in 2026 compared with 2021, however variation can be seen across intervening years, i.e. decreasing following the pandemic and rising in the run-up to and follow-on from the 2024 General Election. The splitting of the 2024-5 survey findings reflect the differential impact on newer versus longer-standing staff.

Overall, the 2026 and the findings from previous years show prevalence of psychological distress (expressed as a percentage) is consistently higher among MPs staff than in the general working population (which is around 20%).

Table 2 – Prevalence of psychological distress among respondents by participation, i.e. consistent, previous respondents and new responders to the annual survey

2026 respondents	All responders	New respndrs	All Previous respndrs	Post General Election (only)	Before and since General Election	Before Genl Electn (only)
GHQ high scores (4 or more)	**50.9%**	46.3%	55.1%	49.2%	56.5%	64.5%
Sample sizes	**627**	352	265	85	118	62

Within the 2026 sample only, clear distinctions emerged between subgroups linked to when staff had first taken part in the survey. 617 out of 627 respondents allocated themselves to a participation category, dependent on whether this was their first time completing the annual survey (i.e. new responders), or previous responders. Furthermore, among those who had taken part previously, it was possible to identify whether respondents were long-standing supporters of the survey (categorised 'Before and since General Election' or 'Before General Election only') or had begun their involvement in the survey only since the 2024 General Election.

Table 2 shows percentage prevalence rates of psychological distress for combined and separated categories, highlighting increased prevalence averaged across staff who have completed the survey previously. However, further analysis shows that prevalence of distress is markedly higher among those who have been completing the survey over a number of years compared to those completing the survey for the first time only after the 2024 General Election. It was previously reported in the 2025 report for WWG that staff taking part for the first time in 2024 were more likely to be new or had been in the role for significantly less time than longer-standing respondents to the survey.

Table 3 – Prevalence of psychological distress among demographic groups

2026	**Sub-sample size**	**Prevalence of psychological distress (%)**
Sample size	627	50.9%
Sex:		
Women	419	47.0%
Men	180	52.8%
Self-declared	5	80.0%
Age category:		
18-35	259	53.7%
36-45	94	54.3%
46-55	120	52.5%
55-65	105	34.3%
Over 65	27	29.6%
Location:		
Westminster	121	52.1%
Constituency	427	49.4%
Working from home	57	40.4%
Length of service:		
Longer-serving staff (employed prior to the General Election)	280	53.6%
New staff (employed since General Election)	323	45.2%
Job type:		
Caseworker	268	43.7%
Researcher	74	56.8%
Office Manager	157	51.6%
Other	105	54.3%

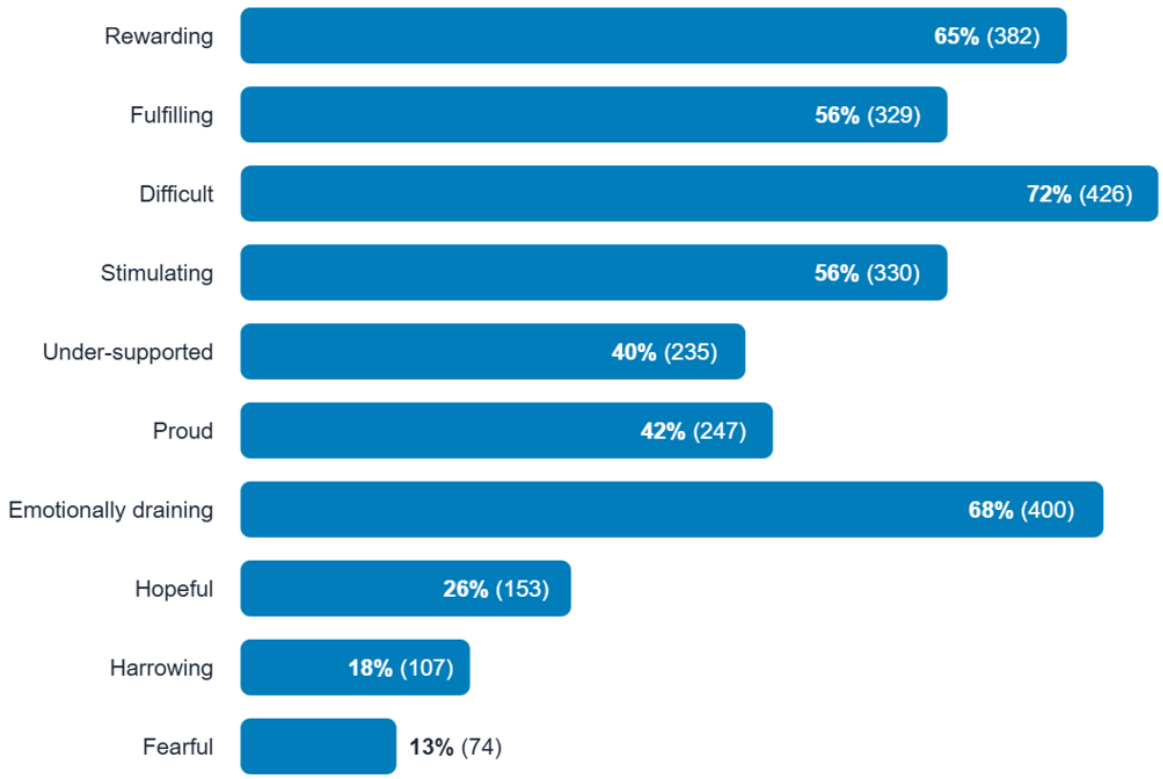
Note for Table 3: Responses from 627 include 605 valid GHQ scores on which overall prevalence of psychological distress is calculated.

Over 600 staff shared their demographic details, with a very small minority choosing not to disclose one or more categories of information. This means that the prevalence rates of psychological distress for each sub-sample (as shown in Table 3) are representative of those taking part within each category of sex, age, location, job type and length of service.

Descriptive findings indicate higher prevalence of psychological distress for staff who self-declare their sex, followed by men and then women. The age categories of 55-65 and 65+ reported the lowest prevalence of distress compared with their younger colleagues. Staff who have worked for an MP since before the 2024 General Election were significantly more likely to register higher levels of distress.

Statistical tests (chi-square) showed no significant association between prevalence of distress and location, although prevalence was highest for those based in Westminster and lowest for those working from home. Statistical tests showed that job type did indicate a stronger association with experiences of distress. Researchers and respondents categorising themselves as 'Other' reported the highest prevalence of distress, with caseworkers the lowest of the four employment categories. This was the first year of the survey in which data on job type was obtained.

Emotional responses of MPs' staff to their job



This barometer offers participants the option to share both positive and negative feelings about their job – they may select more than one perception. The predominant perceptions were 'Emotionally draining' (up by 12% from 2025) and 'Difficult' (up by 7% from 2025). 'Rewarding' had decreased slightly (3% down from 2025) and 'Fulfilling' showed little change (1% drop), however compared with the previous year, the overall direction showed a decrease in positive feelings (Proud down 10%; Stimulating down 8%, Hopeful down 7%). 40% of staff felt under-supported (increase of by 9% from 2025). 'Harrowing' and 'Fearful' had risen slightly (1-2%) since last year.

Challenges and support for psychological health

The survey includes an annual check on potential sources of pressure (also known as stressors) faced by MPs' staff, with responses on a Likert scale recording frequency of exposure to stressors. The scale ranges from 'Always' to 'Never' and built into this is an additional assessment of potential sources of support.

The following tables examine the frequency of experience of other aspects of their work which encompass emotional support as well as emotional demands, working hours, security, constituent contact and skills and training. In order to facilitate understanding of the potential links with mental well-being, these are examined as stressors.

Potential sources of support *(see also Appendix 2, pages 49 – 53)*

Viewed from a perspective of psychological resources experienced by staff, it is instructive to note that in the 2026 survey, 91% feel they 'Always', 'Very frequently' or 'frequently' enjoy working with colleagues from their parliamentary/constituency offices and 76% feel their work makes a positive difference: 'My team are amazing. My MP is a genuinely understanding and good person to work for. My colleagues are supportive, helpful and brilliant at their jobs'; 'We have an excellent office manager who organises us well and the constituency team we have is very supportive of each other, and very loyal to (although occasionally frustrated by) our MP!' Time was a key feature of qualitative comments about the support on offer – pressures often meant it was too little, or the distances too great, unless a crisis or urgent situation arose, which meant there was evidence of self-reliance among staff and/or a disinclination to seek support.

Table 4 considers further potential sources of support on offer to the majority of staff. In light of the Speaker's Conference on working conditions and in order to help quantify the remaining challenge for Parliament in ensuring access to these essential job conditions, the proportions of staff who do not receive these are highlighted.

Table 4 also shows dissatisfaction with pay is at a five-year high, with half of staff feeling this is commensurate with the skills they use at work. Difficulties in other areas including opportunities for skills training and also management support persist for minorities of staff as in previous years.

Table 4 - Rarely or never [do this percentage of] MPs' staff feel…

	2021	2022	2023	2024-5 Previous responders	2024-5 Newer intake	2026
Pay is commensurate with skills used at work	40.2%	43.7%	40.1%	34.4%	32.5%	**50%**
Opportunities to gain qualifications/training in skills needed for the job	32%	29.4%	33.2%	30.8%	24.9%	**28%**
Supported by their line manager (including MP)	15.5%	14.9%	20.5%	13.9%	11.2%	**14%**
Supported by their line manager	18.3%	17.3%	21.7%	22.6%	14.3%	**18%**
MP/office manager/line manager understands pressures in their job	16.3%	13.6%	20.6%	19.8%	10.1%	**15%**
Valued in their job role	10.2%	10.2%	17.1%	17.2%	10.3%	**12%**

*Figures for 2024-5 were differentiated between longer-serving previous survey participants and newer colleagues to illustrate the potential impact of exposure to stressors by the 2026 survey.

In 2026, an additional survey item asked whether staff feel their office management is effective – 13% felt this was the case 'never' or 'rarely', which rose to 30% when adding 'sometimes'. There were many examples of praise for office managers, as well as concerning instances of poor practice: "[They] are an absolute godsend. I'd be lost without [their] support'; 'My line manager is extremely difficult to work with, I face patronizing language, belittling and undermining behaviour every day… despite complaints to the office manager and Member'. Knowledge of the impact of their work is a huge boost to staff: 'The only thing that keeps me going in this job is knowing that I am changing people's lives and my team are too'

Examination of perceptions of pay revealed some of the challenges facing staff on minimum wages or those missing out on a pay rise, e.g. 'I am only on minimum wage. This is because the staffing budget is not adequate. I do two people's jobs and my pay does not reflect this. I believe this is wrong as it provides no incentive for people to work in parliament'; 'I had a promotion to Senior Caseworker, but have not had a pay rise to match'; 'Caseworkers are severely underpaid compared to researchers. MPs cannot pay a senior caseworker at the top of the pay bands due to the cap in each office'.

Whilst some staff felt they were well-paid, funding is clearly an issue. Indeed, it is notable what a lack of recognition through commensurate wages represents to staff and how this mismatch fuels turnover: e.g. 'It isn't just the skills, but the responsibility that is simply not adequately recognised'; 'I am significantly underpaid against market

rates for my skillset and experience level, with increased expectations to equivalent roles'; 'I know I could earn more and have more scope for increasing my hours and salary in another role'; 'The pay is far lower than previous roles I have been in, and for the level of autonomy/responsibility of the role. The salary is absolutely not competitive with other public sector roles'. Many feel pay does not reflect the complexity of their job.

Future problems in recruitment are evident too: 'the majority of MPs' staff could be paid much more outside of Parliament but choose public service. However, this is becoming increasingly difficult due to the cost of living and taxation'; 'if you were to work out pay per hour I could, in theory, earn more at a supermarket'; 'It feels like I work to afford to go to work'; 'I have to claim universal credit alongside my pay to afford my bills as a single parent'. 'To put it bluntly, an MP could not do their role effectively without a team of staff to support them and I find the pay band gap between us, at times, offensive'.

Table 5 considers proportions of staff identifying psychosocial resources that can be expected in any workplace, i.e. control, safety and trust. The findings reported in this table are indicative of more challenging work environments for one-fifth of MPs' staff who took part in the 2026 survey.

Table 5 - Sometimes, rarely or never [does this percentage of] MPs' staff feel...

	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024-5 (Previous responders)**	**2024-5 (Newer intake)**	**2026**
They have autonomy over how they approach their work	17.8%	18.9%	22.1%	18.4%	21.1%	**20%**
They are safe at work	9.5%	12.4%	17%	16%	7.5%	**14%**
They trust others working in their office	9.4%	15%	17.2%	9.7%	9.4%	**14%**

*Figures for 2024-5 were differentiated between longer-serving previous survey participants and newer colleagues to illustrate the potential impact of exposure to stressors by the 2026 survey.

Potential sources of challenge

Table 6 highlights a number of aspects of the job that constitute stressors, i.e. workload, emotional demands/challenges, security, constituent interactions, skills and training. One respondent summed up their experience as follows: 'This is a challenging fast-paced role with no boundaries, no guidelines and wasted efforts, no standard operating procedures, no structure which is challenging'. However, the increases in workload were clearly evident in both the overall quantitative as well as qualitative responses. This is a commonly occurring comment in the data: 'I...put in significant hours above and beyond my contract. It is not possible to complete the work assigned to me in the hours available, and I consistently work beyond my capacity just to cope with the workload'; 'in 6 years I have never managed to work my contracted hours if I

want to keep on top of tasks'; 'its simple maths, the amount of work you are expected to do cannot fit into my contracted hours. We need an extra 2 FTE'.

Workload and working hours *(see also Appendix 2, pages 63 – 74)*

Table 6 – Frequently, very frequently, always [does this percentage of] MPs' staff…

	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024-5 (Previous responders)**	**2024-5 (Newer intake)**	**2026**
Experience interruptions when completing tasks at work	81.8%	72.4%	78.1%	85%	67.9%	**71%**
Find it hard to meet the demands of the job within the timescales provided	51.5%	48.3%	47.9%	52.1%	47.4%	**64%**
Are contacted over work matters on their mobile phone/social media at unsociable hours	35.8%	31.1%	38%	44.6%	39.9%	**47%**
Feel that knowing the long hours others work makes it hard for them to cut back on the length of their own working day	46.3%	35%	37%	33%	35.2%	**40%**
Find the working hours of the job make it hard for them to enjoy family relationships/non-work friendships	28.7%	24.7%	26%	28.7%	24.6%	**34%**

Note: Figures for 2024-5 were differentiated between longer-serving previous survey participants and newer colleagues to illustrate the potential impact of exposure to stressors by the 2026 survey.

Table 6 highlights the growing demands and increasingly negative impact of workload with almost two-thirds of staff finding it hard to meet the demands of the job within desired timescales and almost half contacted over work matters via mobile phone/social media at unsociable hours. The apparent knock-on effect is a 'long working hours' culture, which means it is hard for two-fifths of staff to cut back on their working hours, while one third struggle to enjoy family relationships/non-work friendships due to these long hours. The proportions attesting to these effects at such a high frequency points to a likely impact on well-being and turnover: 'We're currently facing an overwhelming volume of casework, and our staffing levels are not sufficient to manage the demand. The workload has become relentless'; 'We do not have enough warm bodies to deal with the volume we receive, and some people end up waiting months for a response'. 'A great deal of time is spent on campaign emails alone, these are taking time away from real problems in people's lives who genuinely need help.

Working with campaign organisations to improve their method of contact and reduce demands on offices would be greatly appreciated'.

Qualitative comments from hundreds of MPs' staff added further context to the reason for this, e.g. 'In January 2026, our office handled 2.5x the correspondence of January 2025, and we had 3x the casework (almost 1,100 individual cases)'; '5,000 emails in 2024 became nearly 10,000 in 2025. How is any office ever supposed to get through that?'; 'We get thousands of emails a month, and there are two of us to answer all of them and the number of people contacting us for help is only growing'; 'The caseloads are too large and unmanageable and every month sees a new record number of cases. It's not just the case numbers but the complexity of the issues raised'; 'Volumes of urgent casework are impossible to stay on top of. More staffing resource needed'.

Some staff highlighted opportunities across Parliament to help improve matters, e.g. 'Expectations and volume are not adequately supported by appropriate resources'; 'The work schedules are in the hands of the whips, the Table Office, and the Speaker. Workloads are only increasing, and the staffing budget does not keep up with it';

The demands of casework are growing beyond capacity to cope: 'There is no clear set of rules about what cases MPs take, how long before a response, how far a caseworker / MP should go in solving the problem'. "The demands of the job" are hard to pin down!'; 'A tsunami of casework constantly'; 'We have only two caseworkers but 70,000 cases logged since August 24'; 'It's utterly impossible to manage the casework load in the time given and with the resources we have - we do not have enough caseworkers'; 'Members of the public are shocked when I tell them there are only three of us dealing with casework, they think there's a team of 20!'

From the staff member's perspective, the workload was described in many ways, e.g. 'My job is just 100 people constantly chasing me, each of whom have no idea there's another 99 people just like them, and they can't understand why I can't get back to them in any sort of timely way… And I'm not even talking about constituents and casework'; 'I am working almost 3 weeks behind. It's 11.20am, I've done 22 cases so far today and I could cry…'; '…as soon as I get home, I open up my laptop and resume working. I often work until 10pm, and I work at least ten hours over every weekend. If I didn't do this, I'd drown in work'.

Others showed the difficulty in addressing one source of pressure because of its impact on capacity: 'Our salary budget is high, as we retain good staff, which means we cannot recruit to support casework. This means the demands of the job and timescales become unrealistic at times, as we are all doing the work of another person'.

In the meantime, the toll on staff is clearly pushing some staff beyond the limit of what is possible and acceptable: 'The workload is breaking me & I've had enough. My husband is constantly commenting on me working out of hours. We are all drowning,

but I don't think the MP has the first clue despite me giving [them] the figures. [They] don't see the stress'; 'It has taken a significant strain... the hours and pressure I am under - I have made myself sick, cancelled plans as needed to recuperate and my mental health has plummeted'; I have had successive relationships end with them citing my lack of work life balance.

The concept of downtime appears missing for many respondents, with families also paying the price: 'I'm too busy, I log on and work evenings, weekends, my day off, there's just too much to do'; 'I have ended up having to work when I am on annual leave'; 'I frequently work a 65 hour week. I often come home to my partner being sound asleep'; 'My partner and I have had many rows because they say that I always have my face "in that damned laptop"'; 'sometimes I can feel that I am being starved of giving my son the attention he needs and deserves'.

The impact of under-resourcing increases in workload risks going beyond the individuals directly affected, e.g. 'I often meet with small charities and they talk about having a tiny team of 10/20/30 people - I can only dream of that and do worry that MP's reputations are damaged by the limited resource they have'. However, in a job where the MP is the employer and has a duty of care to their staff, the dangers of ignoring the impact of long hours on staff are clearly apparent: 'How am I meant to have hobbies? To socialise? To relax? To improve myself? All in 2 hours, when I'm already miserable and shattered? How can I ever do that? I am so drained, I'm worn down to the bone. I can't take it any more'.

Attempts by staff to 'switch off' from work vary in success, although a minority regard this as what is expected. Some have a clear personal strategy to avoid 'out of hours' contact, but for others this is not possible due to the power dynamic with their MP and the absence of 'work-only' phones, 'meaning we are always receiving messages or getting social media notifications. It can often be hard to not look even outside of work hours'; 'as we have to use our personal phones, people can contact at any time. Most work is done over Whatsapp which makes it hard to switch off as you still receive work messages after hours'. Even if 'replies are not expected during this time...it is hard to ignore and puts the brain back into work mode during private time'. Some staff are spending their own money on purchasing a work phone, e.g. 'I have now bought an additional phone and network contract so that I can turn it off at the end of the day'; 'We don't have work phones, so I am expected to use my own phone for work things. My phone storage is now full, and I have to pay out of pocket for additional storage'.

There are MPs and office managers who support staff in having uninterrupted downtime, '...since our office manager had a talk with the MP a few years ago', with rare exceptions of emergencies or illness. However, others find it harder to protect their staff downtime, 'My MP likes to work at night, I often get texts 10pm-6am'; 'early morning late night all the time - disrupts family life'; 'The MP contacts me directly and

also makes requests in the team WhatsApp group for work to be done…during evenings and weekends'. 'I mute chats and set boundaries, but a work mobile would be easier to switch off'.

Emotional challenges *(See also Appendix 2, pages 85 – 88)*

Table 7 – Frequently, very frequently, always [does this percentage of] MPs' staff…

	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024-5 Previous respondrs**	**2024-5 Newer intake**	**2026**
Tend to hide the nature of their work from people they know outside of Parliament	47.2%	39.5%	46.1%	54.9%	33.2%	**55%**
Cope well with delivering disappointing news	40.6%	40.4%	34.4%	42.9%	35.8%	**39%**
Are expected to display emotions (in person or in writing) which differ from their own	29.5%	25.2%	25%	30.4%	24.5%	**35%**
Feel emotionally isolated in carrying out the job	72.3%	22.7%	24.2%	26.9%	20.5%	**26%**
Say others take credit for work they have done	24.3%	18.2%	19.8%	19.6%	15.2%	**23%**

It is an unfortunate reflection on the current state of politics that its negative connotations are anticipated by many staff. 67% of respondents feel their job satisfaction is negatively impacted by public perceptions of party politics. This effect is so pronounced that the highest proportion of staff since this survey began (55%) tend to hide the nature of their work from people they know outside of Parliament, including from family and friends. Whilst a small minority of those providing qualitative comments on this item (143) had not experienced negativity, or refused to be cowed by potential pressures, the majority avoid disclosure, citing reasons ranging from avoidance of awkwardness or conflict, to the direst threats and abuse: 'This has definitely increased since the last survey'; 'I used to be proud of my job, now I expect abuse'; 'I have received adverse reactions in the past when I have disclosed my role, including longstanding friends who have avoided me since I started this job'; 'I now avoid saying I work for an MP to strangers because of safety concerns; 'I was once threatened with rape and that they would burn my house down with me and my children in it'; '…my husband told a group of men we were chatting to that I worked for an MP. I then received a torrent of abuse from one of them'.

Safety and job security *(See also Appendix 2, pages 54 – 59 and pages 74 – 82)*

Table 8 – Frequently, very frequently, always [does this percentage of] MPs' staff…

	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024-5 Previous respondrs**	**2024-5 Newer intake**	**2026**
Are concerned for their job security	31.3%	32.2%	45.9%	28.7%	26%	**44%**
Fear for their own and colleagues' safety	18.7%	21%	20.7%	38.3%	15.7%	**30%**
Are subject to unreasonable behaviour in the workplace, in person or online	13.6%	13.4%	18.3%	16.3%	9.6%	**18%**

Concerns about job security are highlighted by the highest proportion of staff in this survey (apart from immediately prior to the 2024 General Election). The dependence on the performance and perception of one's employer again denotes the uniqueness of the role of an MP's member of staff: 'Everything the political party and my member does may affect my employment prospects. I have never worked anywhere where my position safety was not directly linked to my own performance and conduct'. This is mirrored in the highest number of accompanying qualitative comments of any stressor (324): 'MP goes - the whole team is out of work. Madness!!!'. Arguably, the psychological impact of job insecurity is hard to avoid in a democratically elected context: 'I am only one scandal or one election from unemployment. The protection period is very short and I never feel secure'; 'I also think the fragility plays on your mind'; 'I'm terrified of losing my job'. However, this does not mean the importance of job insecurity (both now and in future) should be underestimated and where simple steps can alleviate commonly experienced anxieties, these should be undertaken at the onset of employment and updated at regular intervals, e.g. 'Hearing feedback from people who have struggled to regain employment following working from an MP who has lost their seat or stood down can make you worry about your own future job security'.

Job insecurity was also apparent for reasons connected to poor procedural or management practices, including examples of the over/misuse of probation periods and fixed term contracts. The impact on the mental health of one jobholder holds a sobering resonance: 'My life in parliament is a succession of temporary contracts with no job security. It is always precarious which has huge consequences on my financial, personal, and mental wellbeing. I'm out of work in five weeks' time so will probably never see the results of this survey'.

Concerns are also expressed via staff fears for their own and others' personal safety which has been mounting steadily since the surveys began in 2021.

Sadly, unreasonable behaviour is experienced by almost one fifth of MPs' staff and some of this arises from mismatched public expectations of MPs and their teams, as well as from hostility targeted via social media. This is taking an emotional and psychological toll, including among those staff who may be trained or tasked to handle social media: 'it is hard to relax outside of work, knowing my phone will 'ping' with a death threat at any moment'; 'One of my [team] had to open a package addressed to the MP…which contained a bullet and an abusive note'.

There were also instances where unreasonable behaviour emanated from MPs, leading to sobering responses from staff: 'It is also our workplace not just theirs'. Other respondents went further, 'You allow MPs to act like tyrants to staff'; 'I could write a book here! I can't compare it to anything I have ever known in a working environment…there should be more oversight over recruitment, contracts and exit interviews in place. Every decision, no matter how illogical, sits with the MP. Aren't there minimum standards for how staff are treated?'; 'I am concerned that my [former] colleagues continue to be subject to [the] line manager/Chief of Staff's inappropriate behaviour within the office'; 'HR should be handled externally from the office so it is consistent'; 'Staff are regularly placed in unacceptable power dynamics with no redress'; 'Why have MPs been given a 5% pay rise and staff have been given lower pay rise?'

Interactions with the public *(See also Appendix 2, pages 82 – 85)*

Table 9 – Frequently, very frequently, always [does this percentage of] MPs' staff…

	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024-5 Previous respondrs**	**2024-5 Newer intake**	**2026**
Feel expected to perform tasks outside of their remit or power to change by members of the public	66.4%	56.3%	59.7%	67.8%	50.1%	**69%**
Receive email/social media messages from members of the public which are negative in terms of content, personally or professionally	44.2%	36.5%	33%	45.7%	32.8%	**43%**
Feel under-prepared to cope with emotions experienced when assisting constituents with traumatic issues	28.3%	22.4%	20.1%	23.9%	15.3%	**21%**
Feel my job satisfaction is negatively impacted by public perceptions of party politics*						**67%**

*New item for 2026 survey

Constituency staff are likelier to face the public. Their roles brings with them both immediate contact with those in great need and direct exposure to emotionally-charged scenarios and information. For caseworkers, this carries additional responsibility for handling (successfully) constituents' concerns, yet without universal guidance on their role: 'There needs to be a centralised set of expectations, job descriptions and managed of caseworkers'. Among their qualitative remarks were calls for greater access to back-up and guidance, e.g. 'Better support (supervision) for caseworkers - in terms of emotional impact as well as knowing you have done the right thing – [and] access to expert advisers would also be helpful'; 'Caseworkers I believe are the unsung heroes of parliamentary work and little recognition of their efforts takes place'; '[working] as a Parliamentary researcher…is significantly easier than casework with a lesser impact on my mental health - this isn't recognised. My caseload involves hundreds of cases of asylum seekers with significant mental health problems - precautions around vicarious trauma are not in place. The relentlessness of the work gives little opportunity to reflect/recharge'. The toll of casework should not be underestimated: 'For a few months, I was very depressed after dealing with issues of child abuse and threats of suicide. I do not feel that MPs' offices are given sufficient training or preparation on how to deal with this professionally or given a space to process this afterwards'.

'There should be Caseworker-specific training available from Parliament when starting a new role, similar to the mandatory "Welcome to Parliament" talk'; 'It would be helpful to have a Caseworker conference once a year to share good practice'; 'I would like to set up some form of a support group for caseworkers'.

Skills and training *(See also Appendix 2, pages 63 – 74 and pages 91 - 92)*

Table 10 – Frequently, very frequently, always [does this percentage of] MPs' staff…

	2021	**2022**	**2023**	**2024-5 Previous respondrs**	**2024-5 Newer intake**	**2026**
Are required to perform work tasks for which they have received little or no training	49.8%	40.1%	37%	38.7%	41.2%	**43%**
Say colleagues in Parliament (e.g. line manager, MP, office or other colleagues) expect them to carry out tasks which are beyond their capacity to do so	19.3%	17.1%	18%	30.4%	16.9%	**29%**
Feel there is more Parliament could do to support their job role	46.4%	42.2%	44.3%	53.2%	36.2%	**57%**
Feel the well-being of MPs' staff benefits from an effectively resourced Members Services Team			43%	53%*		**44%**

*Combined figure for participating staff in 2024-5.

Skills, training and perceptions of organisational support appear interwoven, with the majority and highest percentage of respondents to date stating, ‘Parliament could do more to support their job role’. This plea is likely linked to expectations of almost half of all staff to perform work tasks for which they have not been trained and over one quarter to carry out tasks beyond their capacity to do so.

The situation around training is a mixed picture, with many respondents making clear, ‘I don't have time for training! I'm too busy trying to do my job’; ‘This is an all hands on deck role, there is no time for taking a day out for CPD’. There was praise for many of the free courses that staff could access, but dissatisfaction with the range of training needs these tailored for: ‘Training and qualification for non-admin senior staff working for MPs is almost zero’.

Careful consideration is required to the accessibility as well as range of training, not least due to the time constraints on staff: ‘it is not realistic to take a full day out in training as caseworks builds up and then causes stress upon return to the office’; ‘capacity and lack of time can lead to me feeling guilty about taking time away from casework to complete this training’.

Alongside protected time to receive training, what is offered needs to be sufficiently bespoke in design and to represent the state of the art across the board. The current upside is training that is free and may well meet the needs of newer colleagues, but the downside is stagnation that fuels staff turnover and associated costs over time. Scope for self-development and recognised qualifications is currently limited and high workloads with repetitive tasks appear to stifle personal growth and lead to the shedding of expertise: ‘I have picked up skills and knowledge osmotically on the job. I have never had the opportunity to study a recognised qualification, and I do not find that employers outside parliament recognise or value L&D sessions put on internally by parliament’; ‘Caseworker is the deadest of end jobs: no qualifications, no useful training. You are just as unqualified coming out as you are going in’; ‘‘There are no opportunities for job progression or development in this role’.

The implications of the status quo for staff morale and well-being, as well as for performance are clear. Where staff have been subject to criminal behaviour linked to their working for an MP, the response of Parliament has left affected individuals exposed to psychological harm: ‘Whilst we have had access to Police support through Parliament, at no point did any member of any team within Parliament reach out to offer further support, nor did they make me aware of any counselling/support services available’; ‘There is a lack of duty of care by my MP towards staff. There is never time to discuss difficult or emotional cases’.

Most challenging aspects of the job?

When asked about the 'most stressful aspect of the job', 210 respondents left comments, of whom at least one quarter highlighted high workloads and volume of work, that many found 'constant', 'relentless', 'overwhelming'. '[It is] Hard to shut out work and work load, am only part time but have to work outside of work ours to get work completed'; 'I feel like I am firefighting all the time and not able to concentrate to do the best work I could'; 'The volume and complexity of casework is never ending, its almost a full time job to log it and I have over 170 active cases to manage'.

Insufficient budgets to employ enough staff were raised by office managers, e.g. 'Our team is crying out for more resource and if I could just have some flexibility with the office/staffing budget, I could make the numbers work'; '...an unbelievable amount of stress but with no remuneration and another year of cut to the bone budgets, it's fast becoming hopeless'; 'IPSA's approach to this was terrible and made OMs in particular feel talked down and unappreciated'.

Expectations from the public are taking their toll and were highlighted frequently: 'The world is on fire and we look into the abyss every day while people throw rocks at us'. The quantitative and qualitative pressures in helping constituents are compounded by 'Abusive contact from constituents. I would like us to have a policy for ending calls or having warnings for people who are aggressive or abusive and this to be made clear to the public'.

External pressures are additional to the weight that conscientious staff are placing on themselves. This extends from 'imposter syndrome' to anxiety at making mistakes and letting others down. For managers this often means carrying the strain of the wider team: 'They are under so much pressure due to the volume and nature of casework and I need to do everything I can do support them'.

The behaviour of some MPs resulted in staff feeling unsupported, or in trepidation of how they might be spoken to or treated: 'The MP's stress is infectious to the team'; 'Unpredictability and unprofessional behaviour of MP'; 'Treading on eggshells re. managing MP. I'm at the whim of [their] moods/being triggered by perceived slights/negative SM comments etc. Shielding staff from this. Feeling unsupported, unseen and lonely in management role'; 'the lack of process to raise an independent grievance about our MP/office leaves us feeling insecure and like nothing would improve'; 'It is disorienting and professionally risky to address workplace issues directly with an MP who holds so much power over your professional life and reputation'.

The pressure on MPs was also recognised and is likely having a trickledown effect on their staff, including office managers, e.g. 'The Office Manager meetings have been very good since Covid and a lot of managers feel isolated, especially if new in post. Being a manager can be a lonely place and we do not have the support of the Parliamentary infrastructure

on a daily basis'; 'I also feel the lack of support disempowers my MP; I know they have concerns in the office which go unspoken because they don't want to cause issues they don't have the scope to fully address. The ensuing feeling of being undervalued or worse was palpable in the range of experiences of staff and how this reflected on them, e.g.

'Having a job that does not consider you valuable to either the public or your employer'.

'[I'm told] I shouldn't be worried about things like holiday, sick, expenses. But I have spent hundreds of pounds of my own money. no work phone, no travel expenses etc'.

'Working in a dirty office that is not managed or cleaned'

There were indications of burnout in a number of comments as individuals reported feeling helpless or resigned to the toll of the job and how feelings of caring had been eroded by this: 'this job used to feel more rewarding but that has faded over time'; 'I don't know [what is most stressful] but I do know that I now have high blood pressure'; 'not being able to see that I am doing a good job…My confidence has been knocked of late'.

Overall, these survey data highlight challenging aspects of the job that remain commonplace in many political offices despite the progress made in recent years. Prevalence of these concerns should not be taken as indicating tolerance for their existence, rather a clear warning of the need for continued as well as new and innovative efforts to modernise parliamentary and constituency workplaces.

In conducting a statistical analysis of the key statistical predictors of poor psychological health among MPs staff in the 2026 survey, the following eight (in descending order of statistical significance) were very highly/highly associated with experiences of distress:

- (Not) feeling valued in my job role
- The working hours of my job make it hard for me to enjoy family relationships/non-work friendships
- I feel emotionally isolated in carrying out my job
- I feel there is more Parliament could do to support my job role
- Colleagues in Parliament (e.g. line manager, MP, office or other colleagues) expect me to carry out tasks which are beyond my capacity to do so
- I fear for my own and colleagues' safety
- I (do not) feel emotionally supported by my line manager

Well over half of MPs' staff expect Parliament to act and in so doing to nurture the skills they need to deliver in this challenging political climate and to protect them from physical and psychological harm. The experience of one staff member underlines the dangers of ignoring the status quo: 'I have constituents who have died, tried to kill themselves on the phone to me, who get my personal number and contact me personally. There needs to be official best practice for these things assigned by IPSA!' Among those experiencing

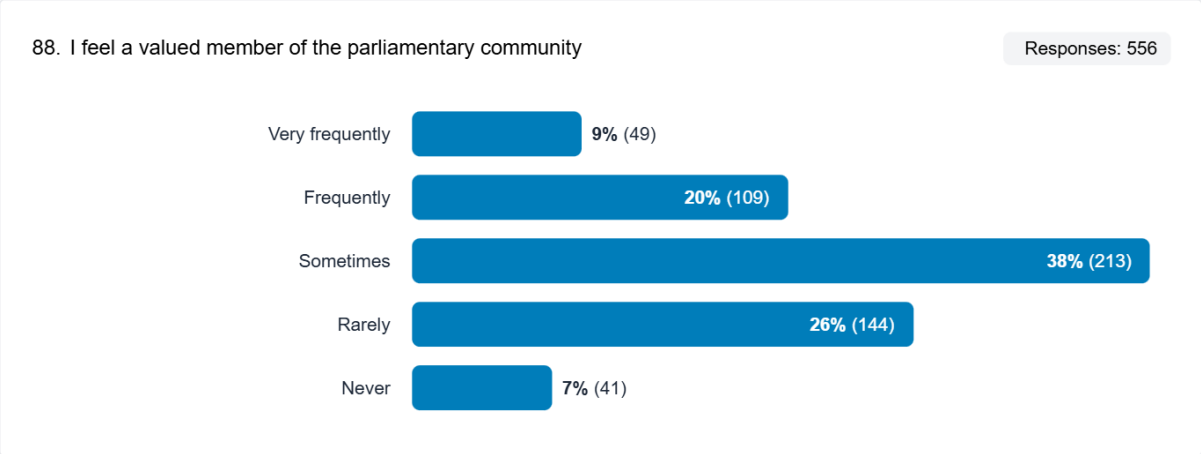
and/or witnessing the psychological toll of their work, some reflected, ‘Many are permanently on the verge of burnout’; ‘I cannot go on’.

Focus on constituencies

Between 529-556 constituency staff completed this part of the survey, which asked about perceptions of feeling part of the parliamentary community. Figures below (items 88 – 92) are accompanied by quotes from staff which illustrate a range of perspectives.

Constituency staff perceptions of fairness and feeling valued

The 2026 survey detected a decrease by 8% in constituency staff feeling valued members of the parliamentary community ‘very frequently’ or ‘frequently’, with one third (185 staff) ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ experiencing this sense of belonging.

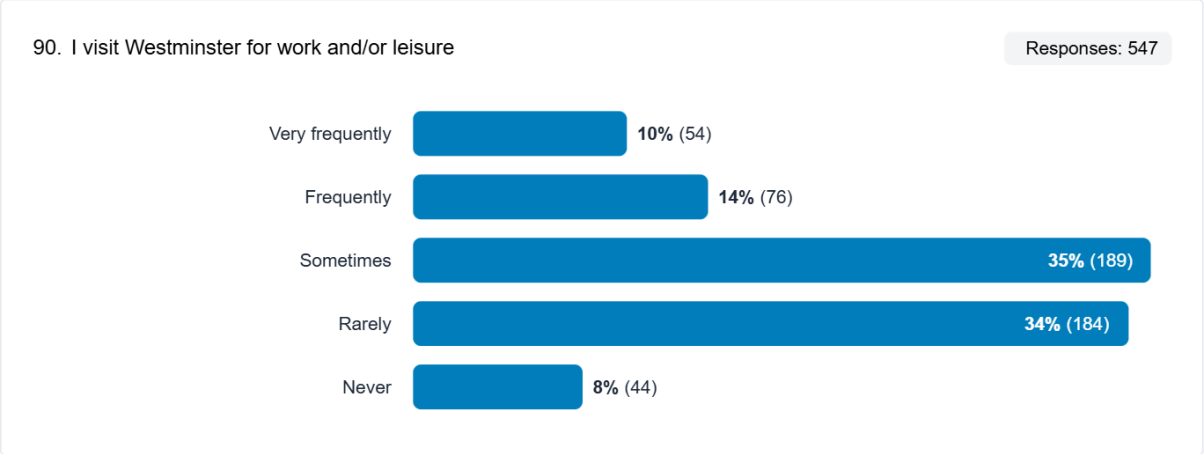


“I don't feel a part of the parliamentary community, it feels there is a separation between those of us based in the constituency and those based in parliament

“It is getting much better that we are viewed as parliamentary rather than constituency staff!

‘We have so little opportunity to visit Parliament. Also, only having 3 passes per office creates two-tier staff’; ‘Journalists and Member spouses, who don't work here as their primary workplace, have more access rights than we do’.

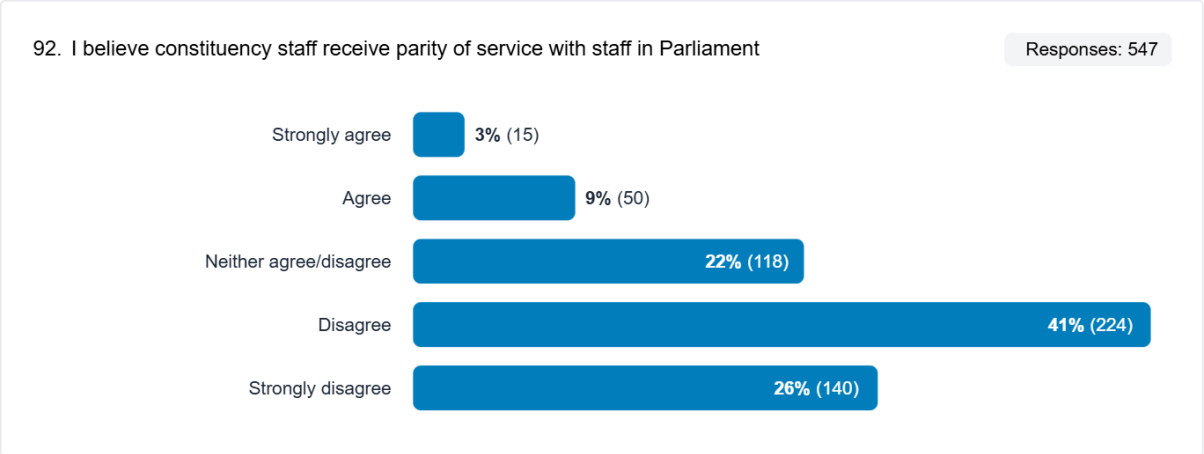
There were very slight increases in the proportions of staff visiting Westminster as part of their work (or leisure). One quarter are frequent visitors, whereas two-fifths rarely or never visit.



‘We attend once a year. We are invited to attend more often but it is not feasible with the workload and would cause more stress and it would good.

‘I only go to Westminster where absolutely necessary, as we are aware of public perception of using funds for travel/accommodation, and the view that it is a "jolly", rather than for genuine work reasons.

There was no change in the percentage of constituency staff (12%) who feel they receive parity of service with their colleagues in Parliament. Two-thirds (364 staff) disagreed with this statement.



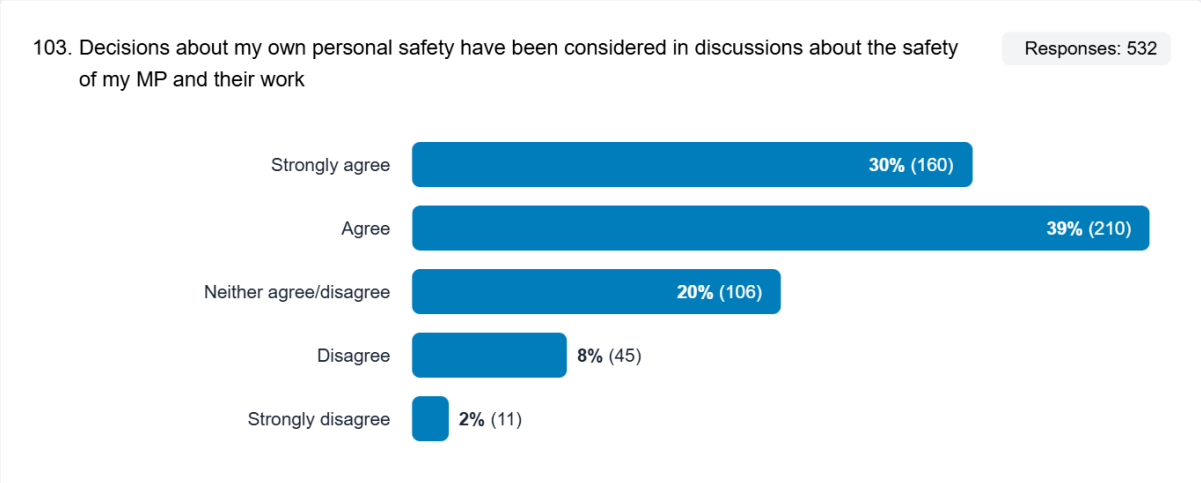
Qualitative comments provided context around both experiences and perceptions of differential treatment: ‘There is a HUGE gulf between Parliamentary and Constituency staff and I am constantly denied the opportunity to work from Westminster’; ‘Staff in Parliament have access to greater benefits than constituency staff: access to a canteen, reduced meal costs, social events, on site activities etc. That is not available to the Constituency office. Just because we don't live in London doesn't mean we aren't struggling with the cost of living ourselves or shouldn't be entitled to these benefits - accommodations should be made to provide a constituency alternative’; ‘as constituency staff, I got wiped out by flu for nearly two weeks in December, yet my parliamentary colleagues had been able to access free vaccinations ahead of time’.

‘The electronic cards are better than previous paper cards, but still involve long queues in the pass office. Also, full pass holders are penalised if not used for 3 months - can be difficult for casework staff to visit every 3 months’; ‘I feel it's insulting to have to enter a ballot to attend annual staff MP events in parliament’.

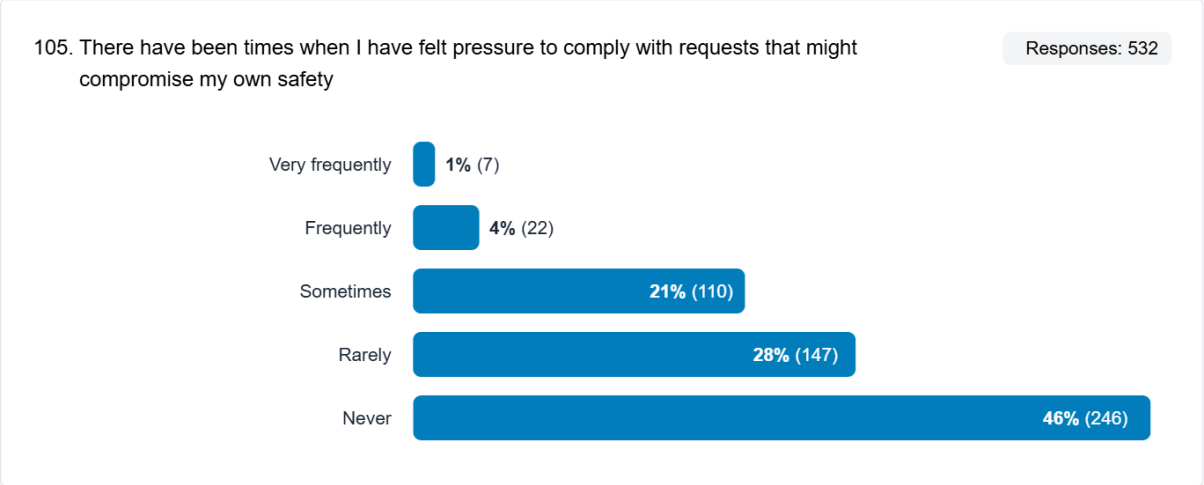
Safe-working in constituencies?

The overwhelming majority of constituency-based MPs’ staff feel safe at work, however 32 (6%) respondents replied ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ to this item. Similarly, 35 staff reported that safety measures have been rejected by their MP or office manager. However, overall there has been an increase from 43% to 57% in safety concerns being remedied by the MP or office manager. 80% of staff felt the House should ensure compliance by MPs.

It is likely of concern that where recommendations have been made by a safety advisor, 59 (11%) staff responses indicated that ‘Some have been implemented’, while a further 17 (3%) stated ‘None have been implemented’. However, on a more positive note there was a 10% increase in the number of staff confirming ‘All have been implemented’, with 71% of constituency respondents recognising ‘All’ or ‘Most have been implemented’ compared with 54% in last year’s survey. Where action is still pending, reasons can differ from budgetary to time constraints, planning restrictions and delays in construction.



Over two-thirds of staff felt their personal safety had been considered in relation to their own and their MP’s safety: between one quarter and one third of staff were not sure about this and/or recognised times when they had been pressured to comply with requests that could have compromised their safety.



Security should apply to staff as well as to the MP

"It has been made clear that the security operatives are only there to protect the MP, not staff members, which can leave us feeling vulnerable.

"It is concerning that PSD do not feel that staff are as important than MPs when it comes to arranging for security operatives at advice surgeries. Staff are also attacked, not just MPs.

"Not being able to have security unless the MP is present is so wrong. Staff are out in the community representing the MP. Most people don't know what the MP looks like & often think staff members are the MP. We should be allowed security when doing outreach sessions in the community

"Security operatives will not cover public events in the MP's name that the MP does not attend.

Positive practices

"I feel my MP always takes the staff's personal safety into consideration which makes me feel safe and well looked after.

"When the MP has been resistant to security operatives, concerns for safety of staff have convinced them.

"Largely in discussion with our Local Security Adviser, who has been excellent

"We each have a personal alarm to use at meetings and take Security Op to meetings where MP maybe at risk.

Causes for concern

"The previous MP I worked for took did not consider my safety. I was subjected to multiple instances of abuse by constituents, many of which the MP witnessed"

“I am a [disabled member of staff] and decisions incorporating my personal needs have not been made. The risk assessment for the office does not include my needs. Planned activities for the office do not include my safety needs”

“My line manager arranged for a convicted sex offender and stalker to meet with her in the office. She decided to work from home that day, so I felt pressured to meet with him instead. I never would have arranged that meeting myself.

“My Member chose to ignore advice to not publish our address, which has meant that we have had aggressive members of the public attend the office unannounced.

“We have implemented a lone-worker policy, but this is tolerated by management rather than understood and respected. It's therefore a constant challenge with management/MP for staff who have to assert their security concerns being alone in the office vs having an empty office

“Have been asked to work in the office when I'm alone

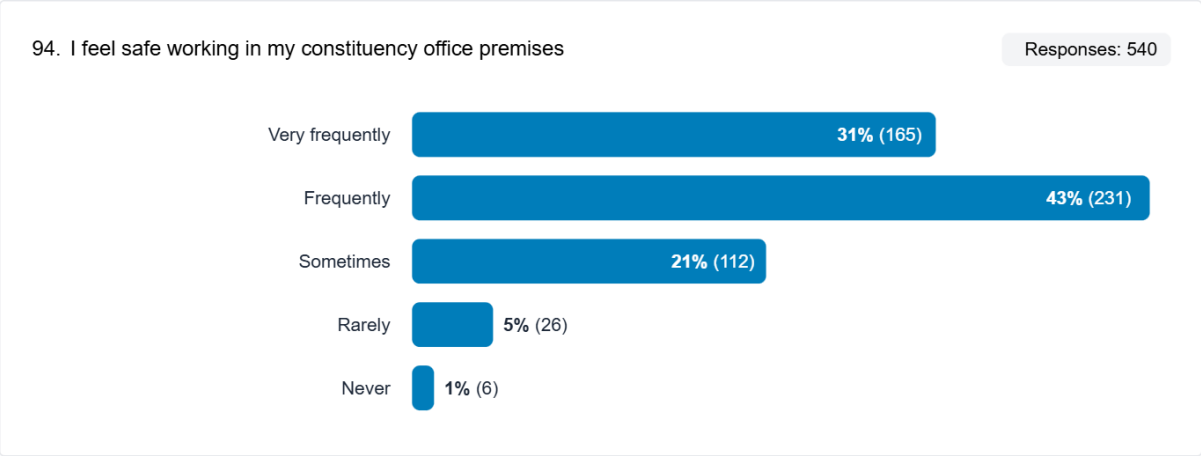
“Carrying out home visits outside of office hours with no specific process in place in terms of monitoring my safety as the office is closed.

“MP wants you [to] meet with constituents on your own outside of the office on occasions

“I was asked to stand in as a replacement for security at a surgery.

“Yes, when with the MP in person walking around constituency or at events – MP [is] very recognisable”

Graphs (labelled 94 – 100) below provide full data on observations of safety in constituency offices and these are accompanied by selected quotes from members of staff that illustrate a broad range of perspectives about safety in constituency offices.



“We try not to work there alone, but sometimes we may do for an hour or so - but I encourage staff not to work there all day on their own

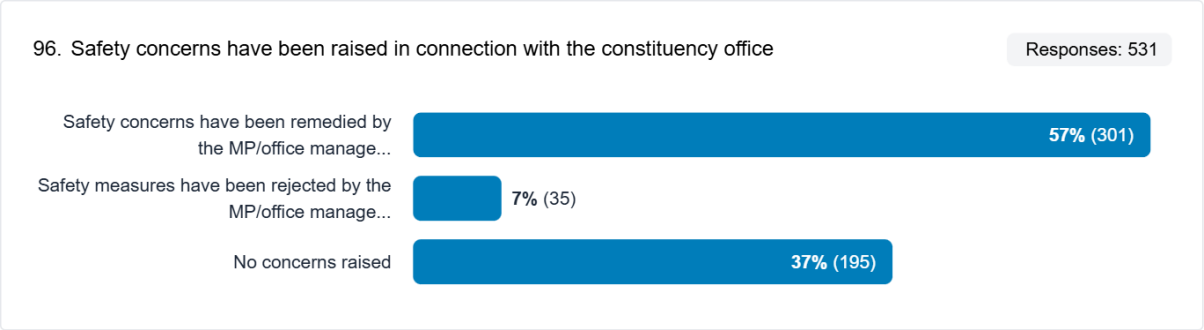
“Now - but we didn't before moving offices

“Not a front facing office, location not known to constituents. I would not feel safe in a front facing office.

“We have only occasional protests/threatening calls that have made me feel unsafe.

“Sometimes concerned about lone working as it’s a shared building at the moment

“Our office has very poor security measures in place



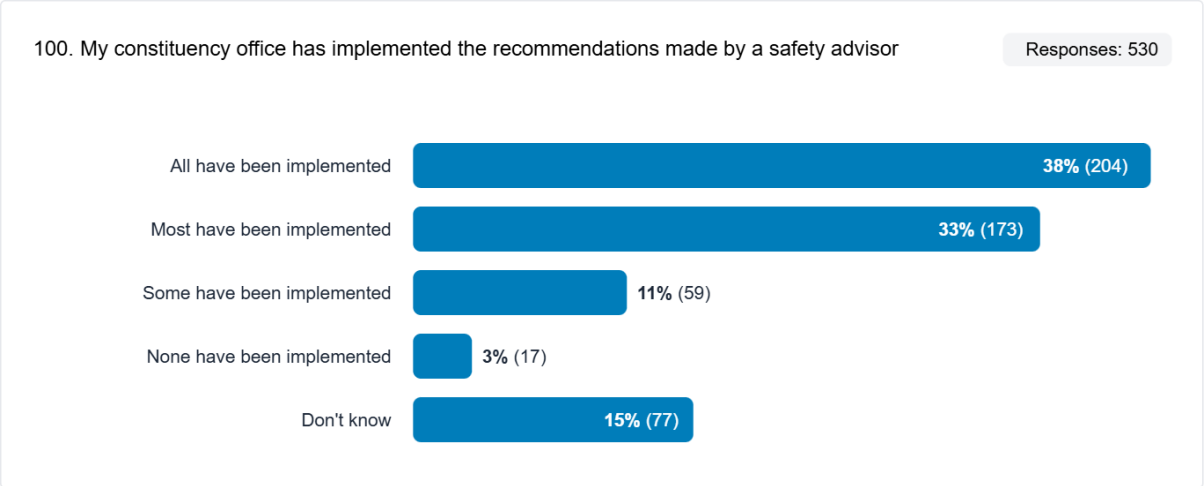
“We have as much safety/security in place as possible. Doesn't stop people coming to the door in their differing states

“Office Manager/MP cannot remedy without sign off from parli security. And despite raising concerns they do not instil confidence they’re taken seriously

“Yes, following an incident.

“My MP acts quickly but ADT are slow to act and sometimes never complete a job for months.

“When we are aware of planned protests, etc, we are encouraged to work from home

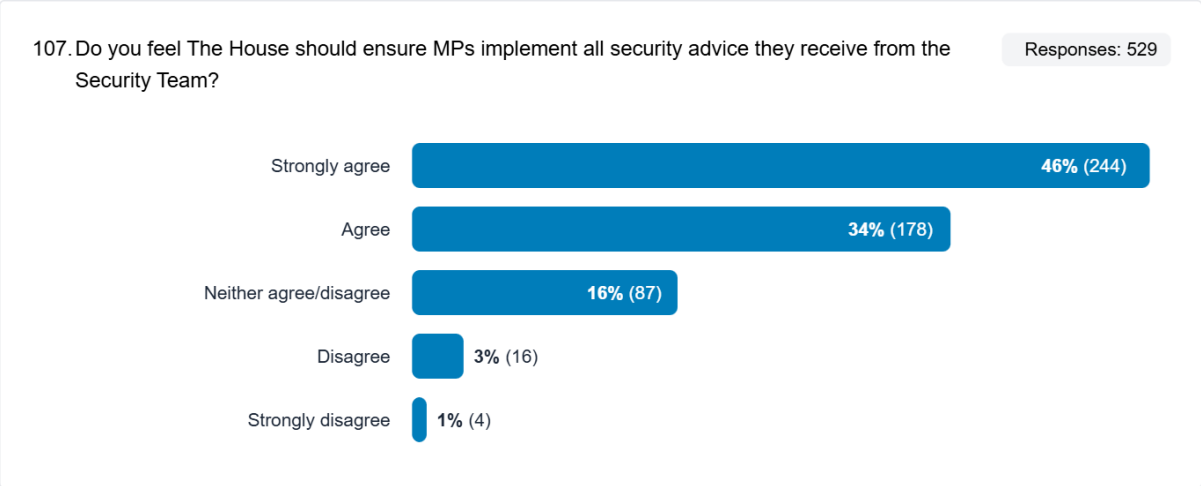


“Staff were misled after initial security measures [were] watered down to be proportionate and due to budget concerns

“We have been unable to implement some recommendations due to our office being a listed building.

“Still waiting on ADT to complete works (7 months later!)

“It's really had to get all of the staff together so that we can arrange situational awareness training - we keep having to cancel.



125 constituency staff made comments in relation to whether the House should ensure MPs implement security advice (see Graph 107). Again, these reflected a range of views:

“The House should have the power to impose security recommendations onto offices/MPs that don't comply. Particularly where there are staff who are being put at risk by non-compliance

“More support in carrying out the advice rather than leaving it all up to the MP/office manager

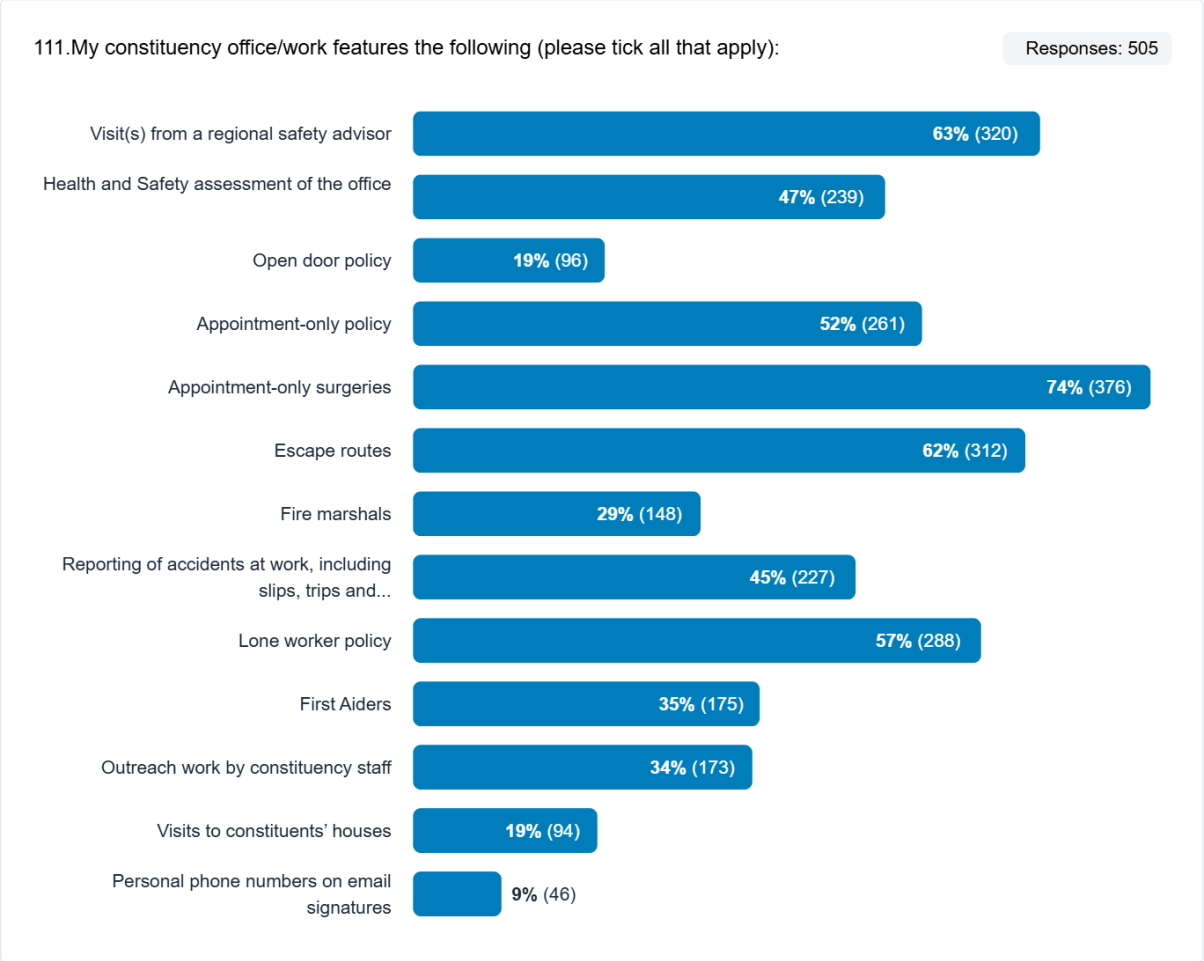
“There should still be flexibility to suit the individual MP's needs and circumstances

“Have adequate resources”

Details of safety measures taken in constituency offices include a range of practical steps, with appointment-only surgeries most popular (74%). Additionally, outreach work was recorded by 173 (34%) of staff, which is a 12% increase from the previous year, with a 5% rise in staff visiting constituents’ homes.

Compared with 2025, there was evidence of increased efforts to maintain safety with an 8% increase in the proportion of staff aware of a ‘lone worker policy’, a 7% rise in use of escape routes, a 9% rise in fire marshals and a 5% increase in first-aiders.

However responses from 46 people reflected a 4% increase in distribution of personal phone numbers on email signatures.



124 staff responded to the question, 'What do you want to see from IPSA in providing a physically safe constituency work environment?'

Responses varied in their remit, requests and remit:

Overall approach:

"A standardised approach rather than MP office discretion

"Better regulation and implementation

"Remove constituency offices from the Office Costs budgets so that spending on offices is not a barrier to undertaking measures or locating in a safe area

"IPSA provide everything we need - all our requests have been met

"Include a budget for safety measures in offices. Regular reviews of constituency office safety measures. "Mandated order to MPs to implement safety remedies and disability standard.

"An office in a box for new offices - "here are all the things you need" in a checklist.

Assessments

Inspections of offices - we have damp and mould

Follow up from IPSA on the quality of the work done by subcontractors

Working practices

Work mobile phones instead of using personal mobiles; CCTV with audio; Remove open door policy; Security Operative cover even in MP's absence

Stricter guidance for all offices around unannounced callers, constituency meetings and lone working

More what suits us re:door camera, not what suits the installing company.

Pay that reflects that constituency staff will always be more at risk than those in Westminster

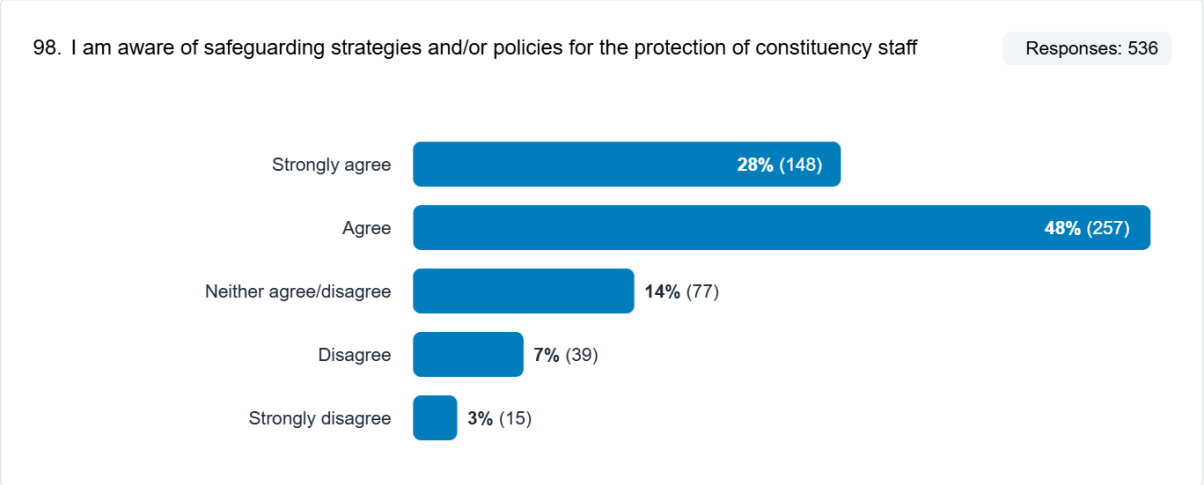
Causes for concern

“CCTV won't be provided to cover the whole car park (which is unlit apart from around the main entrance) because apparently there is CCTV but no one knows who has access to it i.e. it is not attached to the MP's office

“It shouldn't be for me to tell staff of another MP not to include their last names on constituent communications

“The MP wants us to be visible but they obvs work in Westminster so they don't have to be in the constituency. Also it would be great if the office could stop flooding so some money for renovations so the ceiling tiles stop looking like they are about to collapse would be super”

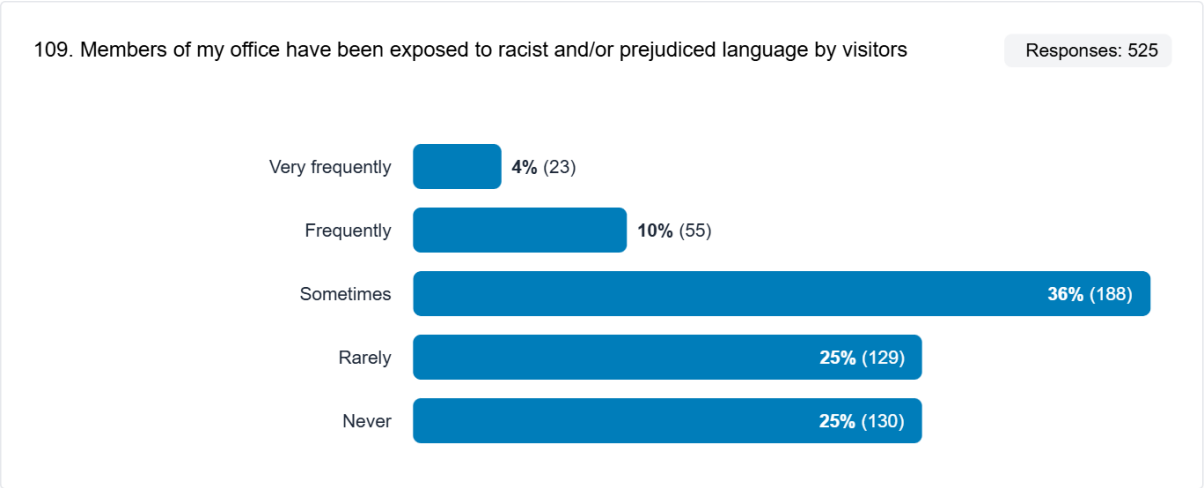
Focus on safeguarding



“I've worked in the MPs constituency office for 4 years- these have never been explained to me.

“Updated on safeguarding strategies regularly.

“They might be there but the process is slow, cumbersome and an additional job for constituency staff which is me.



Half of constituency staff ‘rarely’ or ‘never’ have been exposed to racist or prejudiced language by visitors, which means that half have experienced this, e.g. ‘I …[have] never experienced this level of hatred and racism’. For 78 staff, this is a ‘frequent’ or ‘very frequent’ occurrence. For example: ‘3 times in the last week - my team (mixed ethnicity) are sadly used to explaining to residents that we will stop conversations unless they stop using racist language. We are an all-female team with a woman MP and the misogyny we have experienced has been shocking’; ‘I have repeatedly been referred to as "the girl in XXX's office"’; ‘Once at surgery - not personally directed, but I felt soiled by it’. While many colleagues are good allies to those receiving racist abuse, but sadly this is not a universal experience, with report of a colleague suggesting to another ‘that this

should be expected and we should grow a thick skin - I was shocked that this attitude was coming from within the parliamentary community'.

Table 11 highlights the experience by a majority of constituency staff of threatening and/or discriminatory and illegal behaviour from the public – including more frequent exposure to racist language - as well as encountering disturbing material and verbal abuse. Two-thirds of respondents receive suicidal calls from members of the public, including one quarter that are active suicide attempts. 78% of more than 500 staff experience threatening calls/communications

Table 11 – Frequency (%) of exposure to challenging, disturbing and violent behaviours

	Frequencies of occurrence			
Challenging behaviours	**None**	**1-5**	**6-10**	**10+**
Suicide calls from members of the public	36%	48%	10%	5%
Active suicide attempts	77	22	1	0
Calls/communications from people suffering with mental ill health	9	24	17	50
Racist language or racist undertones in calls/communications	14	26	16	44
Sexist language calls/communication	26	31	18	26
Verbal challenges to a protected characteristic	36	30	14	19
Threatening calls/communications	22	42	18	18
Swearing during calls/communication	15	32	18	35
Verbal abuse during a call or communication	23	37	16	23
Fixation on or stalking of you or another colleague	69	27	3	1 (n=7)
Personally demeaning/verbal attack/argumentative communication	27	33	18	21
Sexually inappropriate language/overtones in phone calls/communications	66	26	5	3
Receiving detailed information about trauma-related incidences	19	28	19	34
Other*	87	6	1	6

*Includes actual and threatened physical violence. One staff member was attacked twice in the past year.

In each of 13 areas of safeguarding, in which respondents were invited to provide how often or how many they encountered, there were highly statistically significant ($p < .001$) relationships with increased experience of symptoms of psychological distress (i.e. raised GHQ-12 scores). The behaviours which produced the strongest correlations with staff distress included handling active suicide attempts as well as verbally abusive, argumentative and personally demeaning comments and swearing during phone calls or communications from the public.

53 participants provided qualitative comments in relation to the 'Other' category. Whilst staff have a clear understanding of the range of motivations and trauma faced by constituents needing their help, the emotional labour and real impact is tangible. For example:

"We receive lots of correspondence from people who are angry, at breaking point, traumatised, suicidal. The level of work we deal with as caseworkers is mentally damaging. Our pay does not reflect this and our value is not shown as the lowest paid banding bracket. I often deal with a lot and it is exhausting"

Examples of how distress can be caused are clear and readers may find disturbing:

"Although the frequency of [distressing] communications may be low, even one of these can be very challenging. I had to deal with an email that a caseworker opened where the male sent a photo showing his wounds and part of his genitals were showing.

"I was sent a picture of a dead baby

"A significant number of distressing personal stories related to assisted dying.

"Bullet sent in the post"

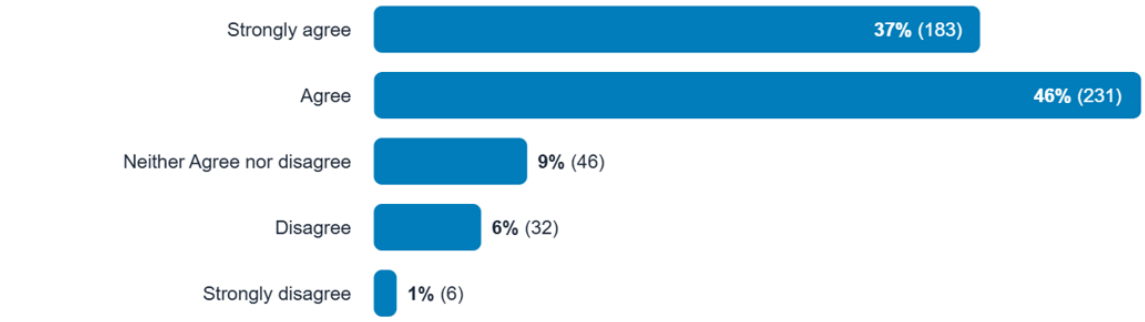
Physical working conditions in constituencies

The majority of constituency staff (83%) taking part in the survey felt their offices met the necessary standards to keep them safe. 80% felt their workplace was in sanitary condition, with 77% agreeing these met the standards they expect at work. Although 84% agreed their office was physically healthy workplace, 14% disagreed that theirs was a physically accessible office.

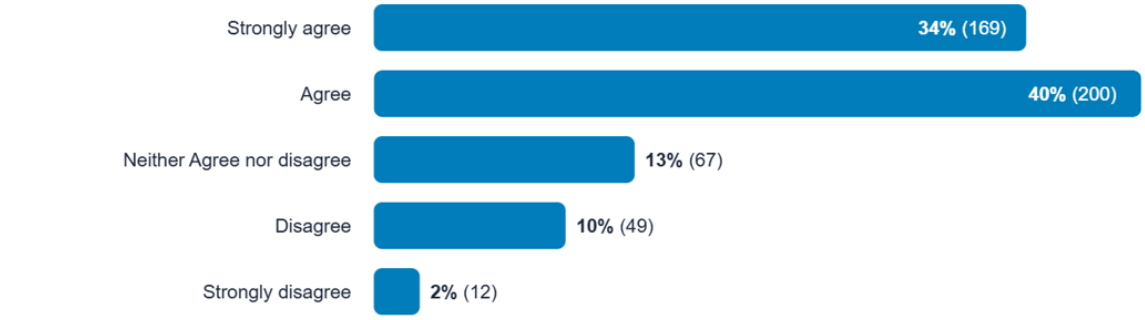
In addition to the proportions who agreed or disagreed with the statements about their physical work environments, there were also 8-13% of staff who remained unconvinced either way.

These findings suggest progress has yet to be made in bringing approximately 20% of offices into line with the physical expectations of a modern workplace.

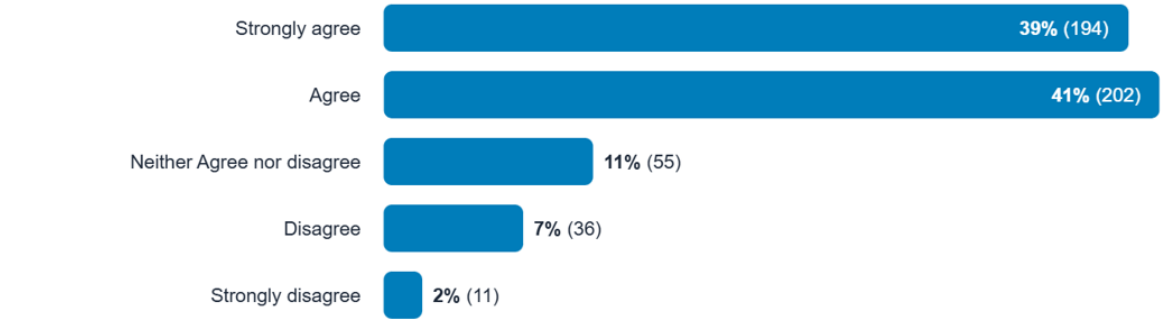
Meets the necessary standards to keep me safe



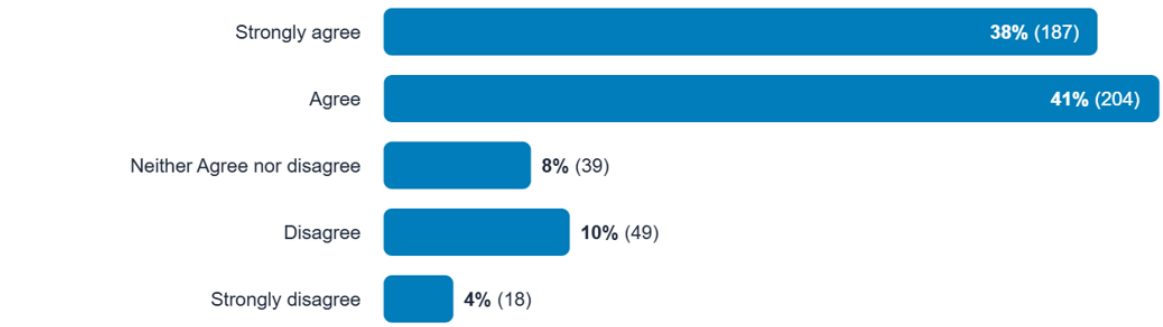
Is a physically health workplace



Is in good sanitary condition



Is physically accessible



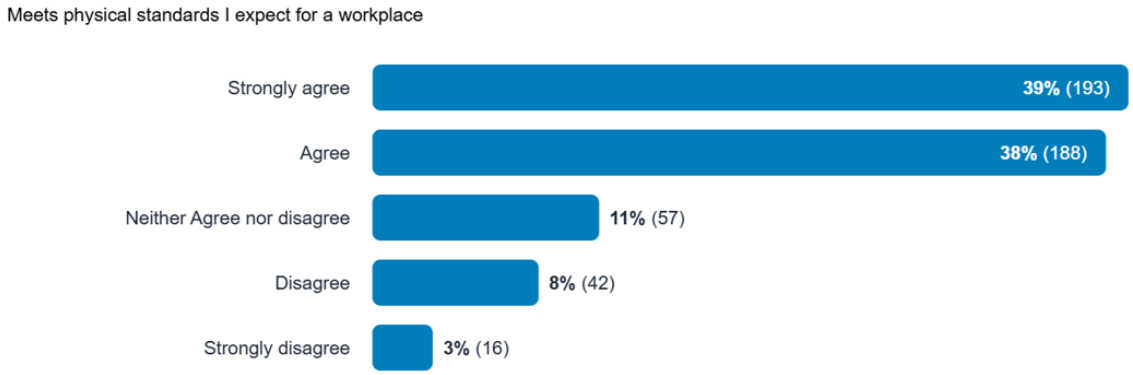


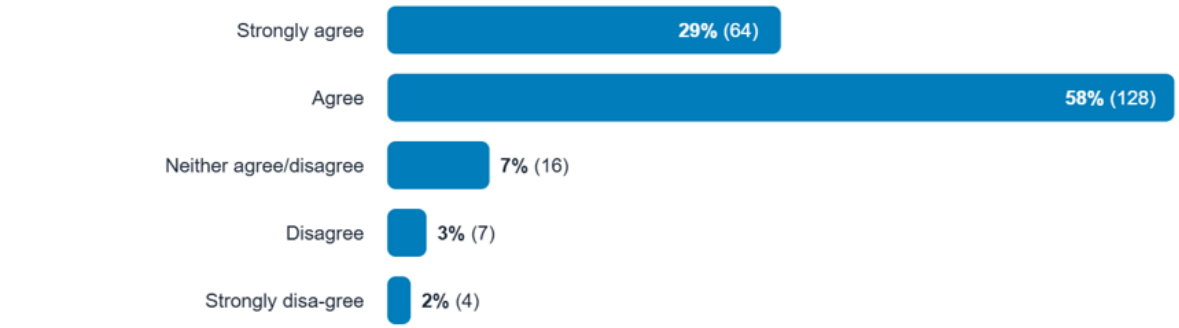
Table 12 – Presence and absence of constituency facilities and safe working practices

	Present	Absent
Hot and cold running water	**94%**	**6%**
Toilet rolls provided	**95%**	**5%**
Located in a physically safe area	**90%**	**10%**
Well-lit ingress and egress from office	**89%**	**11%**
External CCTV	**80%**	**20%**
Regular police visits/checks	**66%**	**34%**
Large plate glass windows which can be reached from outside	**54%**	**46%**
Automatic door-closing at entrance to prevent 'tailgating'	**43%**	**57%**
External meeting rooms checked for sharp objects	**32%**	**68%**
Expectation to work late in office	**22%**	**78%**
Contacted 'out of hours' by constituents	**23%**	**77%**

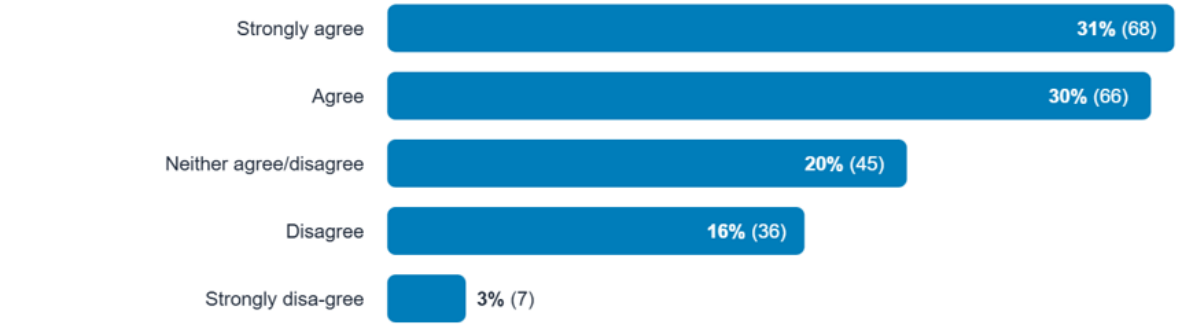
Basic sanitary amenities are available in nearly all constituency offices and for the majority of offices in safe and well-lit areas. However, the presence of commonplace or more obvious security measures, such as external CCTV or automatic closing doors, is markedly less, despite awareness of more vulnerable working situations.

Focus on newer starters (since the 2024 General Election)

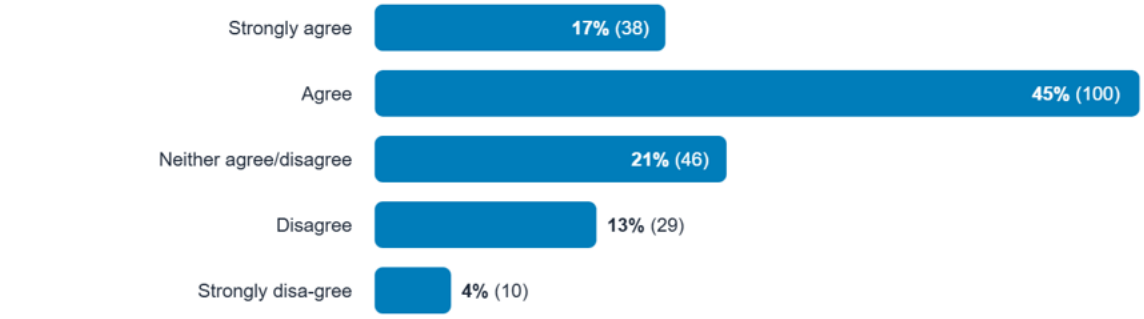
I have adjusted to my new job



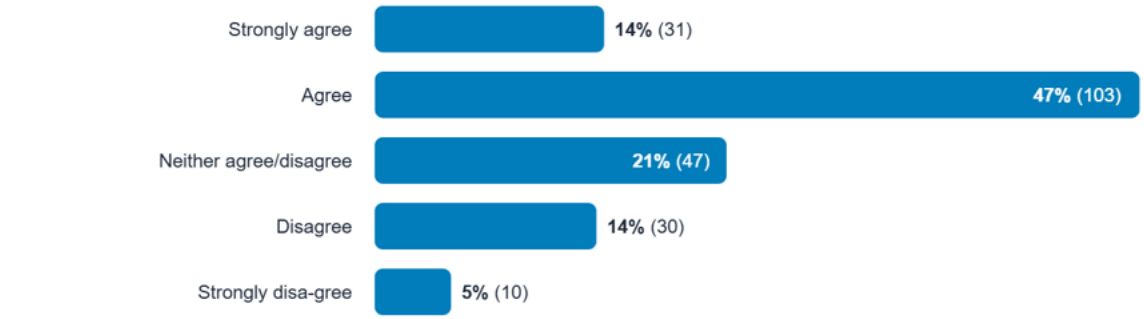
I have been surprised by the busy-ness of my job



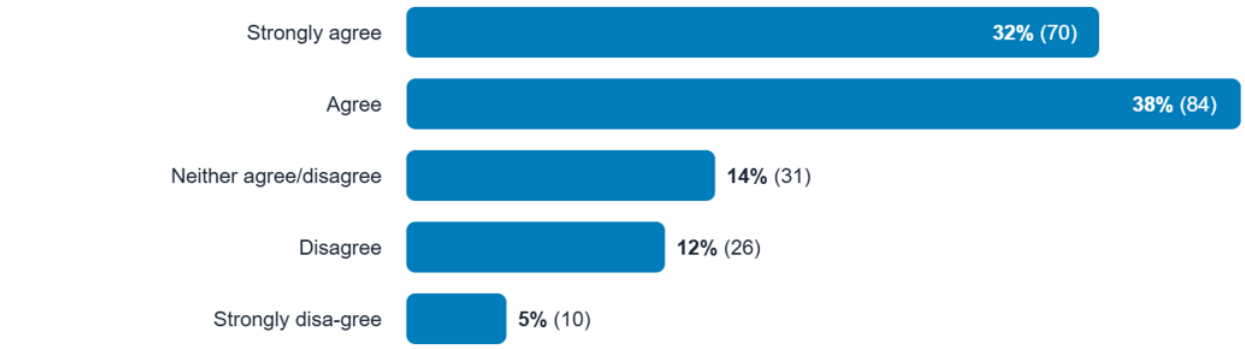
Induction training was useful



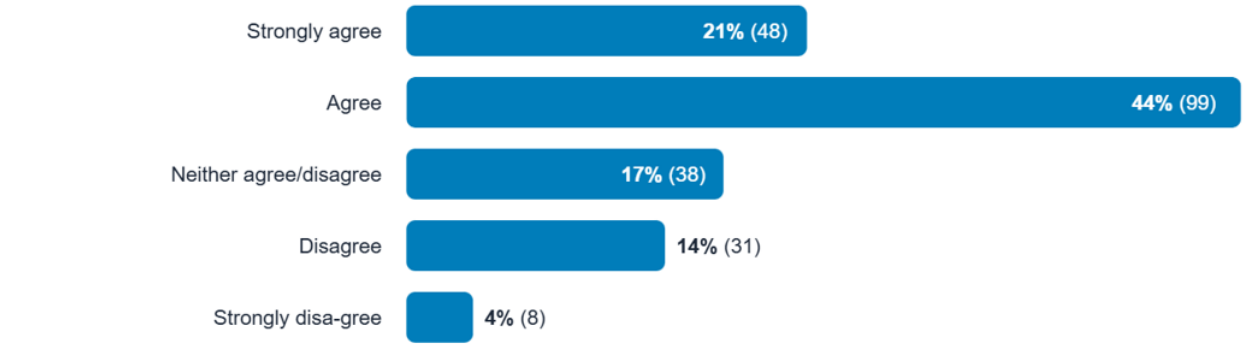
My expectations of the job have been met



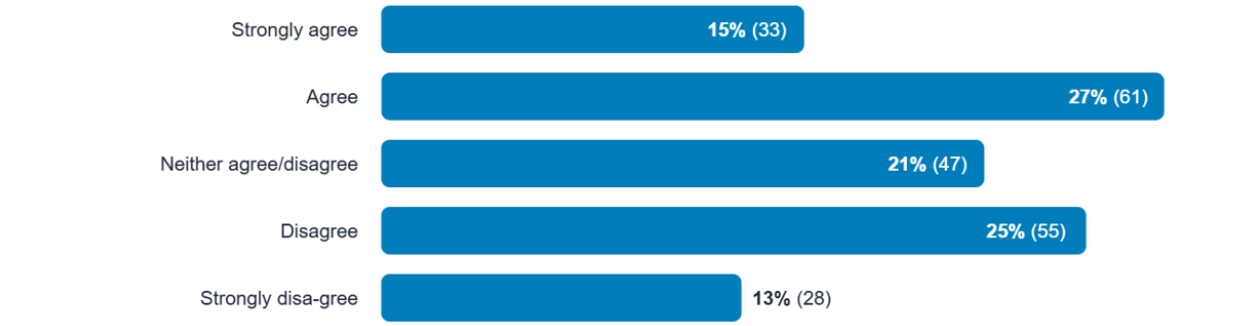
I feel 'thrown in at the deep end'



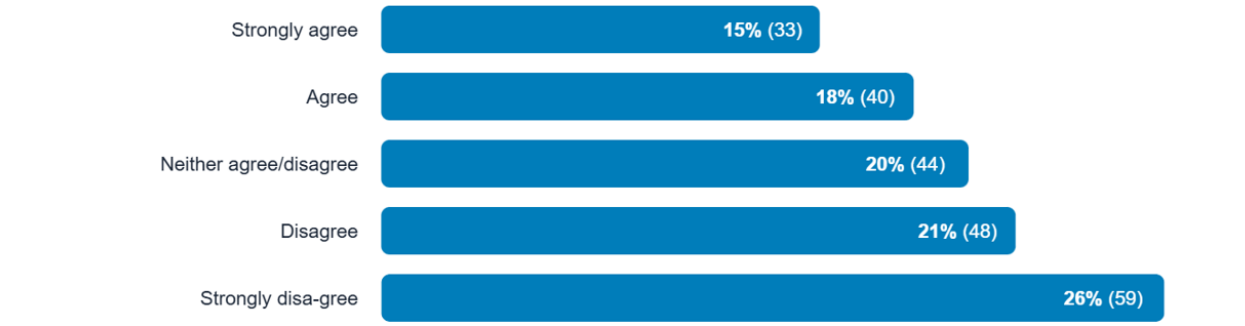
I feel satisfied in my job



My job is negatively affecting my well-being



I feel like leaving my job



For staff who had started working for an MP since 2025, the survey asked how they felt. There were over 221 responses to the items covered. 62% found the induction training useful although 61% found they were surprised by the 'busyness' of the job, with 70% feeling they had been 'thrown in at the deep end'.

Despite this, 88% agreed they had adjusted, with 61% reporting their expectations had been met. 65% felt satisfied in the job, although it is concerning that 42% felt the job is negatively affecting their well-being and 33% feel like leaving their job.

Evidence presented to the Speaker's Conference on improving the working hours of MPs' staff and reflected in its subsequent reports underlined the importance of training and support. Staff raised particular challenges in accessing what was available – particularly for those based in constituencies – as well as finding the time and support from their line manager to do training.

The 2026 survey shows that 46% of staff feel training is accessible to them 'always' or 'frequently', but this represents a 10% decrease from the previous year. Only 27% felt they had time regularly to do the training available, which is a 13% decrease from last year's survey.

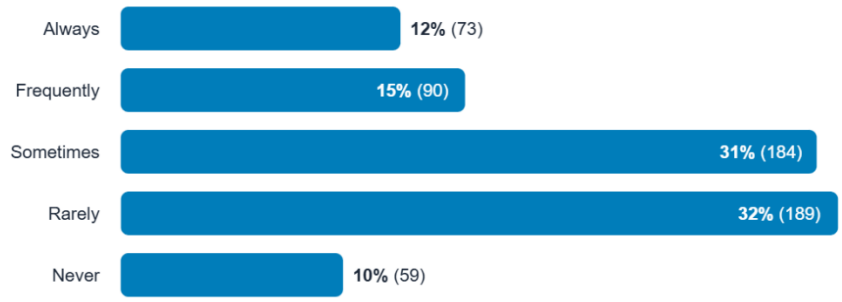
Clearly access to training makes a positive difference as 51% regarded it 'always' or 'frequently' useful and 44% felt it had similarly prepared them for their daily work.

Focus on training and support networks

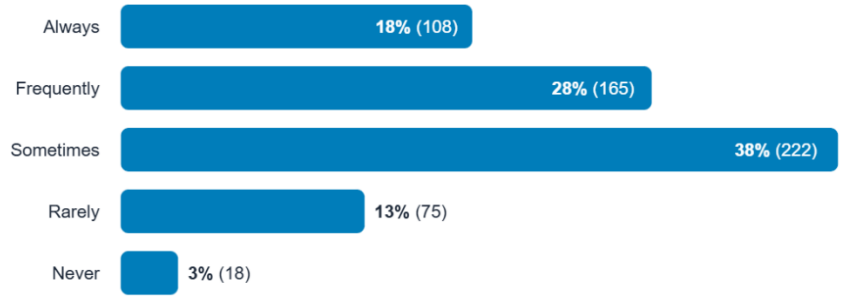
84. We are interested in your view on the training on offer to you by the House. Please indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with the following statements about training on offer to MPs' staff (by MMSST and the House)

Responses: 595

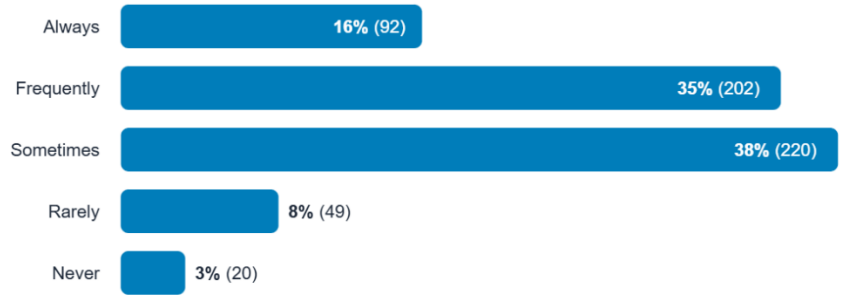
Time to do training is available to me



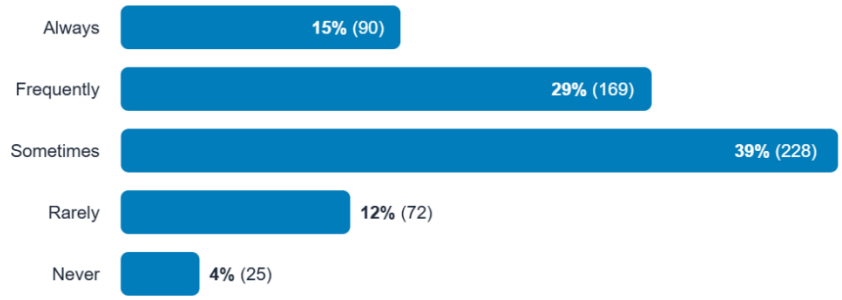
Training is accessible to me



Training I have received has been useful



Training I have received has helped me prepare better for my day-to-day work



The 2026 survey also gauges awareness of various sources and as Graph 75 shows, there are multiple sources on offer. The most well-known are engagement sessions, e.g. the Parliament fair, political party specific WhatsApp groups and MMSST training. Informal and other colleagues networks are also widely recognised by almost two-thirds of staff, including staff groups, e.g. WWG, MAPSA and dedicated discussion spaces, e.g. Teams chats and forums. Colleagues are also a known source of information for just over half of respondents, as well as weekly chats for office managers and HR advice for MPs and proxies. HR signposting was known to 37% of survey participants. The need for support is stated repeatedly in respondents' qualitative comments, e.g. 'Sometimes after horrible incidents, the onus feel put on us which can make it more difficult'; 'I feel Parliament has a duty of care to me and that I have been let down by the very place and people who are meant to protect me and support me. I am very well supported by my current employer but that cannot undo what I had to experience [previously with a different MP]'; 'As a new staff member, I was overwhelmed with the amount of links and resources that were shared. Whilst I have no doubt that support is available, it is often difficult to get a sense of how to utilise this best'.

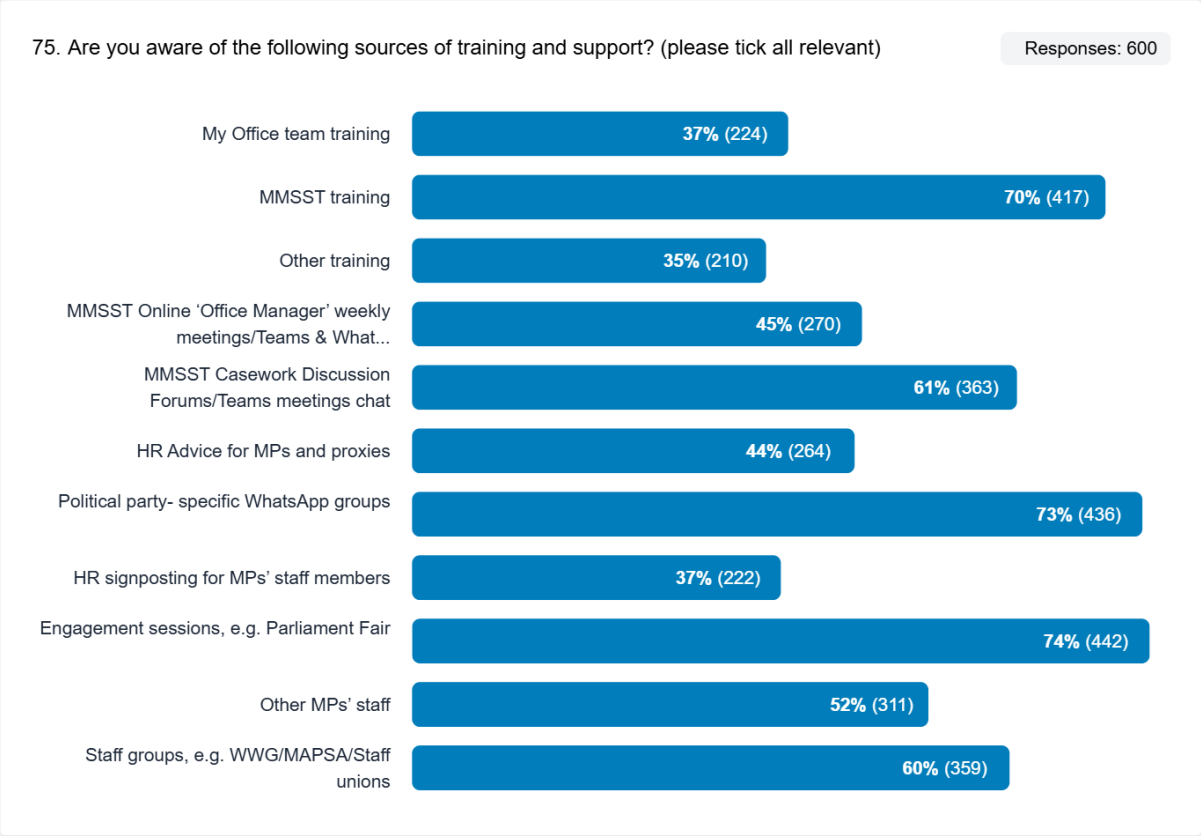


Table 13 highlights clear discrepancies between awareness and use of sources of training and support. The categories of lack of awareness and non-use have been combined here but indicate the importance of both Political party-specific WhatsApp groups and other MPs' staff in regularly providing information and support. Table 14

also indicates that these are the more trusted sources, alongside MMSST and staff office teams.

There were many positive comments about office managers, indicating that many are doing an effective job. These include many conscientious individuals who would like to do more for their teams: 'It's incredibly tough managing two locations. Made harder without clear guidelines on what's acceptable re: travel claims. Therefore, conscious one half of my team get less time/ opportunity for informal support and coaching'.

Table 13 – Use (or not) and trust of sources of training and support

	Accessed 'always' or 'frequently'	**'Unaware of' or 'not/rarely used'**	**Trusted 'always' or 'frequently'**
My Office team	23%	59%	44%
MMSST training	16%	44%	45%
Other training	13%	50%	24%
MMSST Online 'Office Manager' weekly meetings/Teams & WhatsApp chat	20%	71%	28%
MMSST Casework Discussion Forums/Teams meetings chat	16%	61%	29%
HR Advice for MPs and proxies	9%	73%	27%
Political party-specific WhatsApp groups	45%	30%	40%
HR signposting for MPs' staff members	7%	73%	24%
Engagement sessions, e.g. Parliament Fair	17%	48%	31%
Other MPs' staff	35%	33%	45%
Staff groups, e.g. WWG/MAPSA/Staff unions	21%	57%	33%

Perceived efficacy of parliamentary services designed to improve working conditions

Staff were asked to indicate their level of agreement/disagreement with statements about support on offer and initiatives by the House to improve their working conditions. Respondents were reminded that for longer-serving staff this referred to the time since the Speaker's Conference on working conditions, while for newer staff, this referred to the time since the General Election. Over 570 staff replied to these items and in qualitative comments on the survey, 259 staff made suggestions about improving the design of their role, its management, funding and employment rights (See Appendix 2, pages 93 - 98). These make for both sobering and enlightening reading, with clear suggestions worthy of serious consideration for adoption and progress in improving working conditions.

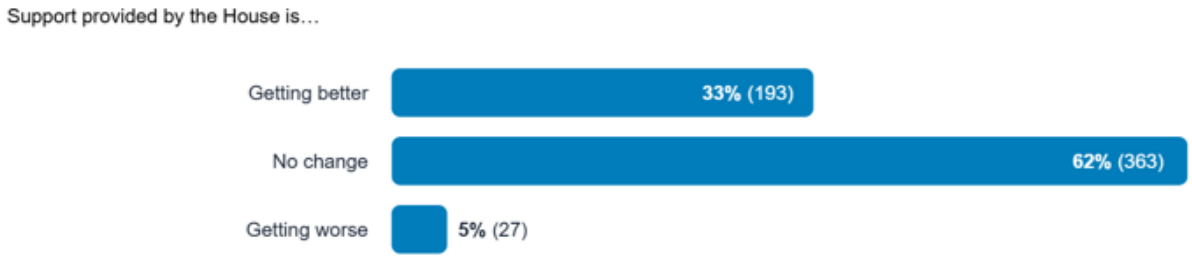
Very small proportions of staff indicated worsening in levels of support - from Parliament or their employer – with one quarter to one third citing improvement. This left the remainder – who represent the majority of staff – asserting 'No change' in their perceptions of support. 'No change' may itself indicate satisfaction with working conditions, e.g. "My MP was always compliant with employment law hence no change"; "Where there is no change - doesn't mean it's bad, it means I am happy with the support/compliance!" "My MP is fully compliant with the law! Surely they all are?!"

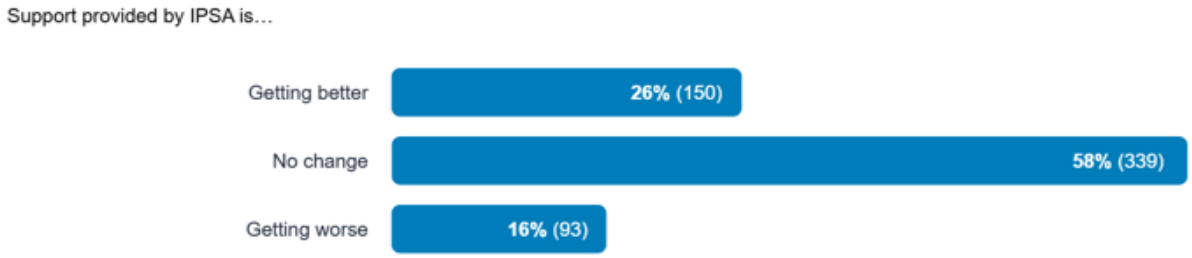
One third of respondents reported improvements in support from the House and from MMSST, while around one quarter reported improvements in support from IPSA and MPs. However, a proportion of staff reported they had not yet had enough time in the job to answer or indeed were "unclear on what support comes from the House vs IPSA vs MMSST".

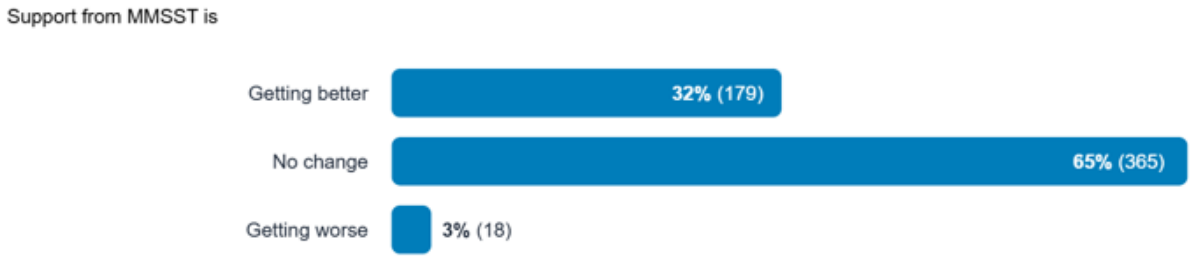
Where staff were clear, feedback was damning in some instances, e.g. "IPSA are awful… IPSA Online is unusable and guidance isn't always clear"; "We are still treated like dirt by the Parliamentary authorities; the lowest of the low"; "I cannot get the authenticator code to work on my new phone. I raised this with IPSA who did nothing to help, so now I don't claim expenses and find booking annual leave to be more stressful than it is worth"; 'IPSA changing the rule meaning proxies can't sign off expenses now means many staff won't get their expenses paid'; 'The IPSA budget is simply unacceptable for the volume of work we are expected to carry out. Until we are able to pay our staff fairly for the work we do the wellbeing of staff will be seriously compromised'.

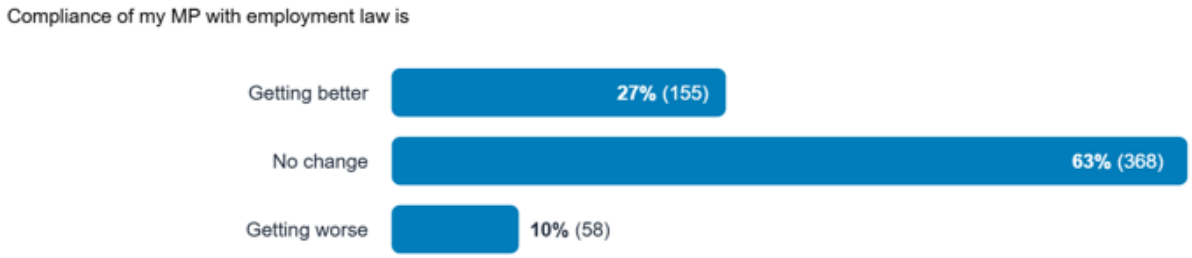
It is clear that improvements can also be reversed, e.g. IPSA 'had been on the up for a few years but they've really ruined trust again now - it feels like it's gone back to how they were years ago. Their team on the phones and account managers are lovely and provide a great service now (hasn't always been the case) but the [message] last month from IPSA's leadership has been obscene'; 'Not given silly advise like, "don't answer the

policy emails". There is often a lack of understanding of how a constituency office works, Its unfair'; 'IPSA need to seriously review workload. Cases are never one touch and sometimes neither is Campaign/Policy work. Social media is a cess pit and abuse is off the chain some days'.









Some staff were equally clear-sighted in anticipating change they wished to see, e.g. "Overall it's getting better, however strongly believe GMB's one employer campaign will make a transformational difference"; "The biggest disappointment currently is that despite a public consultation, there is no real planned uplift on staffing budgets - this is despite acknowledgement that staffers are overworked and underpaid".

“The House/IPSA need to fully engage with the Trade Unions, ensure that MP staff trade unions are appropriately recognised, ensure a facilities/backfilling arrangement is put in place. Without doing so they will fail to meet the ambition provided by the Speakers Conference and MPs staff will remain the staff with the least trade union recognition of any staff group associated with the House”.

There was mixed opinion about the role and perceived efficacy of MMSST, with qualitative feedback ranging from excellent comments about the team, such as ‘The MMSST have been brilliant’ and ‘I think the work the Members team do is so good. It is not long ago there was nothing. Now we have a wonderful group of people who are always there for us and arrange lovely events and training’, to more qualified support, ‘The MMST are fantastic, but as the House is not the employer, their ability to enact change on our behalf is limited’, as well as critical: ‘I don't think they [MMSST] understand the demands of working for an MP… Their whole ethos is out of sync in my opinion’; ‘They're just not accessible’; ‘Can take days on occasion to receive a call back’; ‘When there is tension between the Member and a member of staff I don't have anyone to turn to for advice. I like the Members' HR staff and respect their professionalism… but they are there to protect the Member's interests’.

Mention of distance from what MMSST offer was frequent, meaning that a number of staff have, ‘…little concept of what support is available and have found it difficult to find HR related info online. As constituency staff, I feel we miss opportunities for a lot of things. I have never visited parliament’. As with training, pressures appear to prevent engagement or even the time to find out more about what MMSST offer: ‘It takes a while to know WHAT is available, and how to access, also considering I need to signpost colleagues so need to know what and where’; ‘further depth of training offered also would be good’; ‘I just wish they would reach out and check in with us’.

20 out of 114 staff who provided qualitative comments did not know about MMSST. Raising awareness of the services on offer to all staff emerges as a priority: ‘What is the Members Service Team?’; ‘I have no clue who the Members Services Team is…’.

Psychological distress and potential impact of interventions

Patterns of distress outlined in Table 14 show associations with perceptions of change, with increasing prevalence as perspectives move from positive to negative. Whilst it is not possible from cross-sectional data to infer cause and effect, the statistically significant associations highlighted here leave open the possibility that lack of exposure to positive interventions to improve working conditions can be a risk factor for those experiencing sub-optimal work environments and/or for staff enduring poor mental well-being.

Table 14 – Prevalence (%) of psychological distress among MPs' staff by response to items about changes in employment support

Change in support is...	Getting better	No change	Getting worse
Support provided by the House is...	44.3% (out of 192)	50.7% (out of 355)	69.2%* (out of 26)
Support provided by IPSA is...	39.6% (out of 149)	49.8% (out of 331)	60.9%* (out of 92)
Support from MMSST is...	47.2% (out of 178)	49.4% (out of 358)	64.7% (out of 17)
Compliance of my MP with employment law is...	40.9% (out of 154)	48.9% (out of 362)	74.5%* (out of 55)

Note: *The patterns of increasing distress as perceptions move from positive to negative are statistically significant for support provided by the House ($p < .05$); support provided by IPSA ($p < .01$); and compliance of MPs with employment law ($p < .001$). No statistical association was found here between prevalence of distress and perceptions of change in support from MMSST.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Demographic characteristics of MPs' staff across five years of survey

	2021	**2022-3**	**2023-4**	**2024-5**	**2026**
Sample size	213	315	357	465	627
Sex	72.3% (n=154) women	74% (n=233) women	67.9% (n= 242) women	66.2% (n=307) women	69.1% (n = 433) women
Age category:					
18-35	51.5% (n=101)	43.8% (n=138)	42.6% (n=152)	44.9% (n=209)	43.9% (n=275)
36-45	14.3% (n=28)	17.5% (n=55)	17.6% (n=63)	17.4% (n=81)	15.5% (n = 97)
46-55	21.9% (n=43)	21.3% (n=67)	21% (n=75)	20.4% (n=95)	19.5% (n=122)
Over-55	12.2% (n=24)	17.5% (n=55)	18.7 (n=67)	17.6% (n=82)	21.2% (n=133)
Westminster **Constituency** **Working from home***	28% 72%*	26% 74%	24% 76%	25.9% 74.1%	20.4% 70.3% 9.3%****
Length of service: Average Median	5.3 years	4.6 years	5.3 years** 3.9 years	3.29 years***	4.54 years
New staff (employed less than 2 years)	33.3%	TBC	TBC	TBC	56.3%
Job type: Caseworker Researcher Office Manager Other	Not available	Not available	Not available	Not available	 44.2% (277) 12.5% (78) 25.7% (161) 17.6% (110)

*2021 data: 80.3% of replies (i.e. more) from constituency offices were from women versus 52.5% from women in parliamentary staff roles ($chi_2 = 16.4$, $p < .001$).

**2023-4 data: Average (5.7 years) and median (4 years) length of service are statistically significantly longer for constituency-based staff than for Westminster-based colleagues Mean = 4.02 years; median = 2.6 years; (U (df = 1) = 6.13, p = .013).

*** Statistically greater length of service for previous responders (7.56 years) than new responders (2.01 years) to survey t(439)= -9.32, p<.001.

****2026 was the first survey to collect data on job type.

Appendix 2 – Selected qualitative comments from 2026 staff survey

4667 qualitative comments were provided by respondents alongside quantitative ratings of their experience of 30 aspects of their work (referred to in the main report as the 'stressors'). The overall quantitative chart for each item is provided here. Additional qualitative comments accompanied responses to other aspects of the survey and illustrative examples have been referenced in the main report.

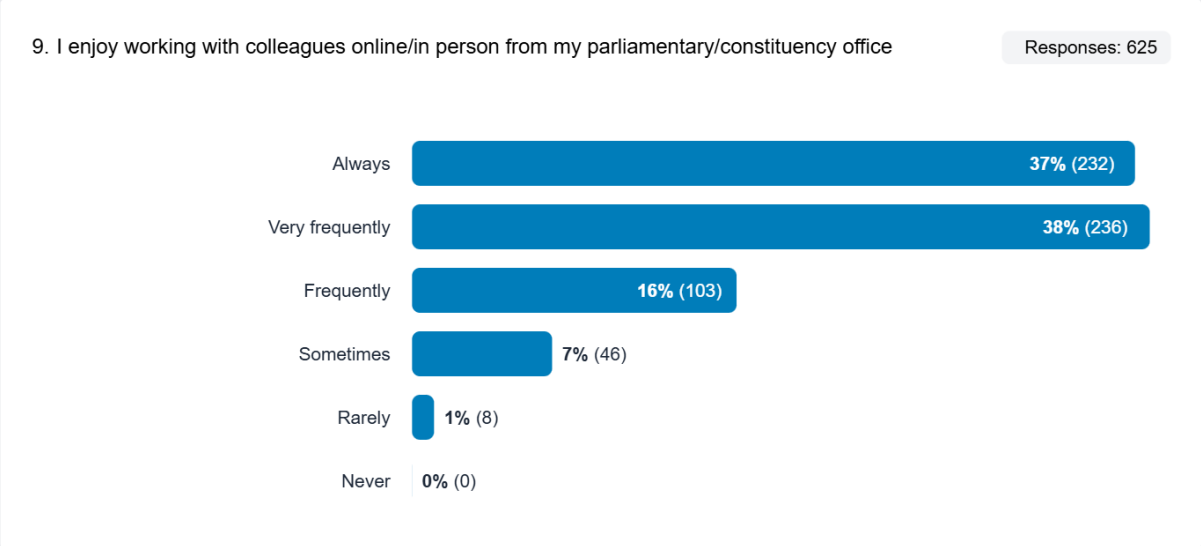
Due to the sheer volume and rich detail of data provided by respondents, commentary and analysis are provided in relation to areas where very large numbers of staff have provided qualitative comments; other topics are sampled simply to provide examples under the relevant sub-heading or survey question. However, this handling of the data should not encourage the qualitative comments to be seen as of lesser value than the quantitative findings summarised in the main body of this report. Indeed, a number of the recommendations in the main report stem from these qualitative observations.

In analysing these data, attempts have been made to highlight both positive and negative examples, as well as potential areas for concern. Every effort has been made to remove potential for the identification of respondents.

It is important to point out that in discussing key themes under main and sub-headings, illustrative examples of responses have been selected to be as representative as possible of those with a similar focus, as well as indicating clear instances of good or poor practice:

- Working with others: pages 49 - 62
- Workloads, working hours, skills and pay: pages 63 - 74
- Job insecurity: pages 74 - 78
- Safety: pages 78 - 82
- Negative social media communication: pages 82 – 85
- Emotional labour: pages 85 - 88
- Coping with the job: pages 88 - 92
- What do MPs' staff want from Parliament?: pages 93 - 98

Working with others



164 staff left comments about their co-workers, managers and MPs. There were many positives: lovely (12); lucky to be working with (6); amazing (3); excellent (3).

Respondents were frank in their assessment of colleagues, whether for better or worse: 'The people in my office are lovely. It is such a supportive and friendly environment' and 'My colleagues often get me through the day. They are incredibly supportive and we work well as a team'; 'I work with a fantastic team, both in-person and online. They're very helpful and friendly and I don't have any reservations about asking for support'; versus: 'I enjoy working with all of my colleagues except one [who] I believe is dishonest and poor at her job'; 'one colleague never stops talking and drives me crackers'.

Equally, some found working remotely from colleagues had benefits and disadvantages: 'I like the flexibility of working from home, but the team members are very isolated from each other. I'm the only one who lives in the constituency'; 'Although working from home often results in higher output, it can make me feel isolated and lonely'.

Experiences of communication between MPs' teams working across sites produces both benefits and challenges: 'Constituency colleagues (immediate team) are lovely and [I] put a lot of effort to connect with them as working in Parliament. More distant colleagues from other offices in Westminster - harder to connect, gives me more anxiety'. Approaches to work clearly influence how teams interact: 'We have a very healthy office culture - for the first time in my life I look forward to work'; versus: 'Extremely lazy, entitled colleagues. Low work ethic and equally disinterested in helping vulnerable residents'.

The pressures of working in the job also impact on team dynamics: 'It is a small therefore intense environment, so when we get on it's good but when there is heightened stress or tension the small team-nature can be difficult to navigate as there is nowhere to get an escape'; 'Can be quite an intense atmosphere on occasion!'; 'We

have had some lovely, talented staff but they keep leaving. We have had a huge staff turnover and I am the only person who has been here since the beginning'. 'The pressures of the job mean that, as Office Manager, I don't feel I ever have enough time to check in with staff as much as I would like'.

Naturally, the efforts to work hard in a challenging job produce their own reflections:

'There's level of naivety from House staff and IPSA as to the realities of working for an MP which can be frustrating'.

Areas of concern:

Workload – quantity and quality

'The team are great and really hard working, however the volume of work that is expected is unrealistic, so the hardest part of my job is trying to hold back the wave from them so they don't get overwhelmed or burnt out'

'Since the general election, the increase in workload has been immense. I have had to fully train a team from scratch while coping with the immense workload. I feel terrible for the team as I never had this pressure when I first started'

'…definitely an identifiable gap in the pressures of workload on those in the constituency office compared to on the Parliamentary estate. Constituency staff are exposed to the public in a way Parliamentary staff are not'

'…everyone is stretched and the budget cannot afford to reward people for any extra effort - there is no incentive. People do not feel they can take their leave as they will be behind when they come back, more people are off sick'

'the complexity of cases and the emotional toil has increased significantly, it is difficult to get respite when you are jumping from complex case to complex case'

Views held by staff

'Colleagues can have very fixed views and are dismissive of constituents whose opinion doesn't match theirs. This can lead to narrow-mindedness and unconscious gatekeeping'.

'Parliament attracts people who have strong and passionately held views, this has the potential for creating conflict'

'There is a culture of mansplaining for sure. Male colleagues who are the same level of you like to feel like they are senior for no reason'

Right to remote and safe working?

'Working from home should be protected. Currently staff members are subjected to the whims of their managers and MPs'

‘I would like a little more flexibility for working from home when it is needed’

‘When I have lots of spinning plates, I feel the need to work from home to be able to focus…’

‘My office manager is amazing, but someone else in the office has made me feel physically ill by insisting I can do as much physical work, such as a clear out when I have a physical disability. I'm made to feel lazy. I also have a compromised immune system and was told to work with covid’

High staff turnover

‘We have had some lovely, talented staff but they keep leaving. We have had a huge staff turnover and I am the only person who has been here since the beginning’

‘…due to the stress in our office and the terrible leadership, everyone leaves. We have had 11 resignations since July 2024’

A spectrum of experiences was reported in qualitative comments on this job feature. The comments below convey a range from inaccessible, to dispassionate to highly supportive:

‘MPs don’t have time for traditional/pastoral/support functions. Therefore, Chiefs of Staff/Office Managers carry the burden

‘I feel invisible. I make everything happen, will little, if any thanks or recognition. My MP has never once asked me anything about me - how I am, my family, my life outside of work. Nothing. I don't feel I exist as an individual to him.

‘Due to the busy nature of the job and the…distance, I get very little time with my MP, so am unable to get ongoing support. I know that if I specifically needed it, they would be there for me.

‘Felt as though I previously had the support of my Member initially but as time has gone on, feel that my value to him has waned and the world of Parliament has changed his perception somewhat.

‘Emotionally and mentally the office manager has no time to support me, however, they are a nice person but too wrapped up in their role and emotionally unavailable

‘Support is there when you hit rock bottom, and I learnt that during the past year, but there is little in place to stop you getting to rock bottom. It's impossible to say no in this job.

‘My office manager and MP are very approachable and supportive. I feel seen, respected and heard.

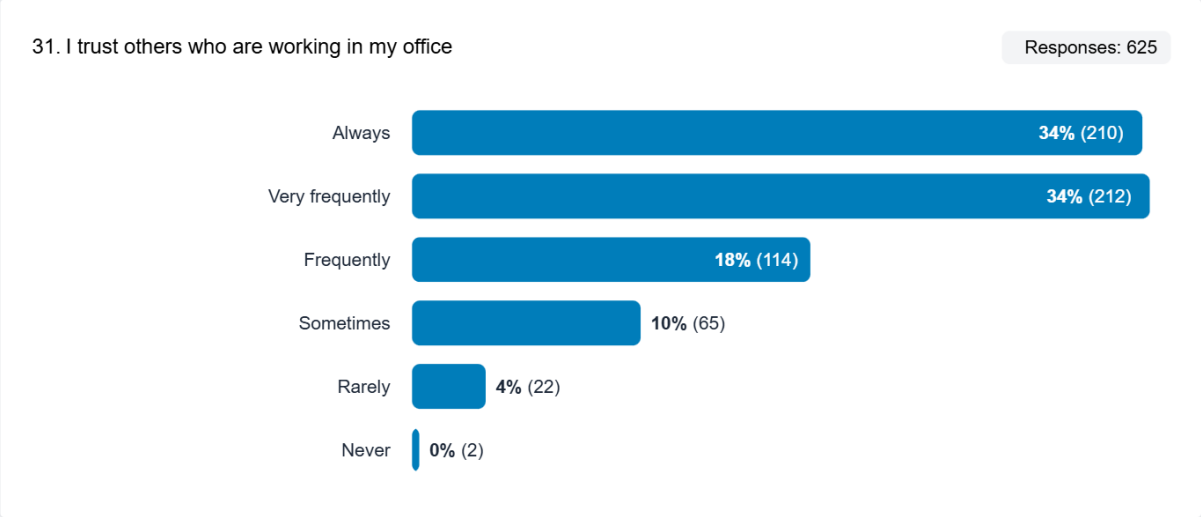
‘If I need time out from difficulty casework, ask for additional training or am dealing with a personal matter, I know this will be respected and time given without question.

‘I feel that I can be open and honest with my MP and office manager and know that my feedback will be taken onboard.

‘[They] are an absolute godsend. I’d be lost without [their] support. Support from the House and EAP is lacking, so I’m grateful to have an experienced OM who understands and can get support for me

‘My current office manager is the best I've ever had

‘Some MPs may be elected coming from a background where they have never managed anyone to suddenly having a team of people to manage…it has been clear the MP is out of their depth in terms of how to manage conflict.



‘I trust my team completely, as they are my constant source of achievement and job satisfaction.

‘My office team are brilliant, and we are very close

‘My colleagues are pleasant but I do not share overly personal issues with them

‘Feels like we're in it together

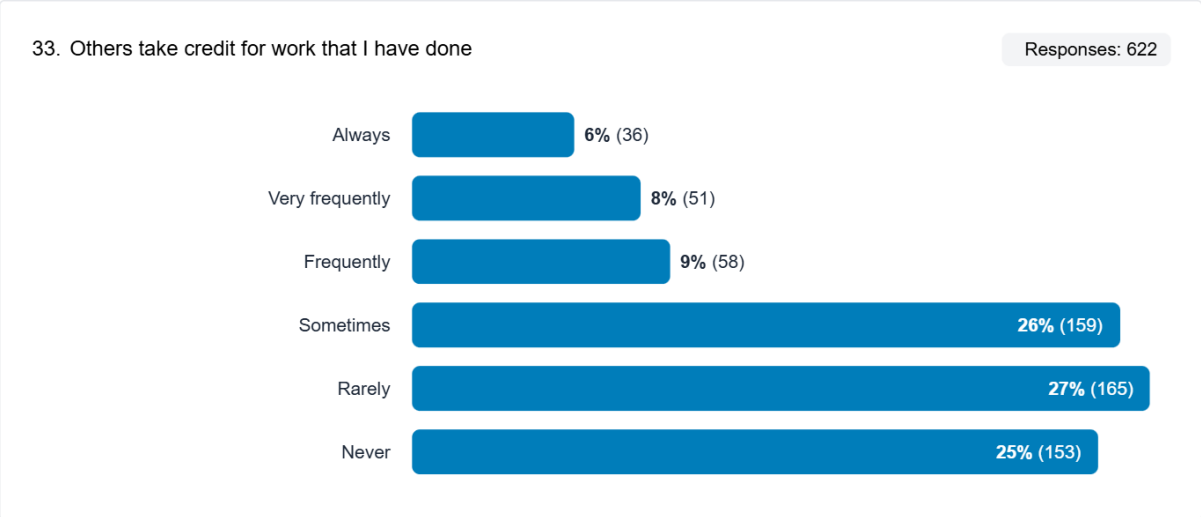
‘The team is mostly in the constituency, it is easy to feel isolated in Westminster and not know what's going on.

‘I also feel somewhat undermined by a colleague that is more junior than I am. This is never addressed by my office manager

‘We have one member of staff who is openly sexist and ableist. He has put me at risk…on more than one occasion.

‘Small offices and pressures mean that often there is at least one person on the team that doesn’t seem to be "pulling their weight" and that can be stressful

‘There have been negative experiences already, even though the office is only just over a year old. I was forced to report a colleague's inappropriate behaviour which resulted in their resignation



‘This is the entire point of my role - to make the MP look good!

‘I am well used to this. I don't really mind to be honest… I don't need a pat on the head or recognition for the work I do.

‘Always always always. I would say in the last year and 9 months, I have received credit or praise for about 4% of the work that I have produced

‘I work with a lot of men.

‘…with the mansplaining, my male counterpart loves to take credit for work he didn't do.

‘I am really proud of the work that I do, but I struggle to feel ownership or a sense of personal achievement when you’re role is very much to be unseen, anonymous, and for others to assume your work doesn’t exist and is done by the MP

‘I am quick to praise my team when they get a good result though I feel like my contribution to running the team is overlooked.

Unreasonable behaviour in the workplace, in person or online

218 respondents provided additional qualitative comments on this item. It is important to bear in mind the potential impact on a staff member of exposure to this, whether an infrequent or regular occurrence. The following words arose commonly within qualitative feedback: unreasonable (31), aggression (20), rude (19), out of hours contact (9), harassment (7), bullying (5), racist (3), gaslighting (3).

Feedback indicated experiences included those with MPs as well as members of the public: ‘From constituents - verbal abuse in person, phone and email. Threats of violence. Office equipment being thrown. From MPs - abusive language, unreasonable working expectations outside working hours’. ‘Some MPs feel like they have a hierarchy in Parliament because they are elected. Most act fine but to some it goes to their heads. It is also our workplace not just theirs’. The potential for exposure to toxic behaviour to spill over from what is witnessed cannot be underestimated, e.g. ‘Sexual harassment in my workplace (but not within my team)’.

Unreasonable behaviour was manifest in a number of ways, including unhealthy working practices: ‘I have had a period of being regularly contacted by my Member when signed off sick. The team are expected to correspond via WhatsApp for nearly all work related tasks rather than email and work phone’; ‘texts [from the MP] on weekends, in late evenings etc. all the time, not rarely’; ‘Contact from MP on work matters at unsocial hours, including late at night, weekends and even on Christmas day! Tells me (and others) to ignore it, but easier said than done…’; ‘leaving during your lunch break frowned upon as you need to be monitoring Chamber or available for the MP’; ‘Given 'urgent' tasks within unreasonable/impossible deadlines’. Sometimes, these extend beyond what might be expected of employees, e.g. ‘requests from my MP to undertake tasks which blur the work/personal line (e.g. driving related fines, council tax queries).

There is also evidence of pushback with staff calling for, or taking action, to reclaim their evenings/weekends: ‘ The only thing I would reference is the increase in Whats App Groups and other out of hours modes of contact. We have been restrictive in this area, to ensure staff have downtime and there is not pressure to respond out of hours’; ‘I have worked in emergency services and never had the contact out of office or working hours, that I have had since entering politics. So if the emergency services can work on this basis, why can’t politics?’

There are examples of more personalised negative treatment: ‘Boss turns appraisal into personal attack, even if I've been working well’; ‘Since I was injured in the office and received life changing injuries…The manager has not treated me well’. Where this type of behaviour is observed by a third party, remedial action can result: ‘Just the other week a newly elected MP told me to “F off”. Thankfully it was spotted by and reported by a Senior [parliamentary postholder). Subsequently I received a semi letter of apology’. However, recourse to formal procedures does not necessarily produce just outcomes: ‘My MP lied in a HR meeting, then [when] presented with the truth doubled down. There’s no independent HR process, if they don’t like you, they can just pressure you until you go’.

It is clear some MPs may be unaware of the impact of their interpersonal style, however this underlines the importance of raising awareness of this for the sake of individual staff well-being as well as effective functioning: ‘The Member at times can appear to speak from a position of superiority and this has resulted in interactions with staff including myself that feels totally condescending’; ‘My MP gets very emotional and reactive. The tone of their Whatsapp messages to me are regularly very elevated. Then they are polite in person / in front of people’; ‘MP 'drifts off' when I (or colleagues) are mid-conversation with [them], often distracted by social media on [their] phone’.

Being available to staff is something that MPs may find hard, however the importance of this cannot be underestimated. ‘There is a lack of duty of care by my MP towards staff. There is never time to discuss difficult or emotional cases. I used to enjoy the challenge of helping constituents and took great pride in resolving cases. I now feel totally demoralised’. The need for time to debrief and seek the support of the MP as the employer is clear, not only for the benefit of ensuring staff feel valued, but also for strengthening resolve in a difficult job. According to one staff member who had served in various roles, their conclusion was adamant: ‘the hardest job in an MP's office has to be caseworker - you deal daily with stress, misery, rudeness, unrealistic demands and it is unrelenting’.

The role of the office manager is clearly important, not least in enacting the HR functions needed in a small office. There were many positive comments about office managers (see earlier in this Appendix) and an example in ‘Causes for concern’ below where they clearly above and beyond to the extent of supporting staff financially. There

are some whose management style or behaviour has fallen short of what is expected and the operation of a whole office can be undermined: ‘I am also aware of an instance whereby the office manager and the MP have been having issues and it has created an incredibly uncomfortable and awkward environment for the rest of the staff’; ‘There have been instances where conflict has occurred between staff with the office manager and the MP has not managed the instances correctly… because [of] the MP's refusal to deal with the unacceptable behaviour of the office manager’.

Causes for concern:

Working with MPs

‘MP [has] unreasonable expectations of what can be achieved in a working week. Takes frustrations with wider political issues out on staff’.

‘I never know whether I am going to be told off, shouted at or have a nice chat with the MP on any given day. It is quite an unsettling feeling’

‘Unreasonable requests/expectations of tasks. For example, being requested a (genuinely non-urgent) task to be completed that day at 7 PM on a Friday. Subjected to passive aggressive comments if an expectation is not met’

‘My MP often makes unreasonable asks of me and the team. This stems from a general lack of managerial experience and direction meaning they change their mind on strategy regularly’

‘I have also had to engage in conversations with my MP where they have expressed views which are unsavoury and which I disagree with profoundly. One being regarding recent Mandelson/Doyle scandal where both men are known to be gay, and were associated with convicted paedophiles. My boss unfortunately conflated being friends with paedophiles and being gay stating that "you can't criticise anyone for being friends with paedophiles because they will say that doing that is homophobic". They have also used language like "sexual deviance" in my presence when referring to homosexuality despite knowing full well, I am a gay man’.

‘Unfortunately, our office is pretty dysfunctional! The MP does not set the right tone and it has been toxic/unpleasant at times. No-one is ever good enough. It is very disappointing as we have lost some fantastic people’.

‘The MP employs a connected party. This person is constantly undermining and bullying several members of staff. No action is taken by the MP’

Working with Office Managers

‘I have problems entering and leaving the office because of the steps. Because I was hit by the fire door in the office which resulted in me having an injury to my spine. I had a major operation…since then my mobility is impaired. I have reported the stairs to both

the MP and office manager and Access officer at [local] council 3 months ago but nothing has been done. I have to have help getting up and down the stairs. I understand that then Access Officer has made some recommendations but the Office Manager and the MP have done nothing'.

'I'm not allowed a work phone- everything is on my personal phone which means there are no boundaries between work and personal life. I'm also expected to have my member's email on my phone'

'Being made to feel like I'm emotional or disappointing when I said I'll work from home because no other staff were in the office and ...[at a time] someone [was] threatening the Member - when I said I didn't feel safe in the office alone, my manager laughed at me and said 'you're in the wrong job then' but no other staff would be in and I can do my work from home - I'd never ask if others were in. Our policy was 'only open the door with someone else' so that comment made me feel crap. Another time, we were told by management we were all replaceable which didn't make us feel great'.

'We are regularly gaslit about HR matters'

'Myself and another caseworker are expected to deal with all of the suicidal, social care, mental health and safeguarding cases. This has necessitated us calling the emergency services on the spot. We are expected to pick up safeguarding issues from emails outside of work hours. We are subject to tirades of abuse from constituents who are very unwell. We are not provided either any support for this and no allowances are made for our workload'

'I feel like I get bullied to be managed out'

'It is more the work environment which is unclean rather than the people. Although they can be in fresh at times. Food is discarded or dropped around my desk and in the office and not cleaned up'

'I was repeatedly pushed to disclose my confidential medical history on multiple occasions, directly to [a former] line manager [who] requested references from previous employers after I had been in post for more than three months under the guise that 'House of Commons HR' had asked for this information. I supplied this information, however it subsequently came to light that neither the Member, nor House of Commons HR had requested this'.

Working with Colleagues

'Working in close quarters for 8 hours a day none stop gets to some people. One time at Christmas a colleague thought I had hidden their phone and held a lighter and aerosol to my face to try and get me to tell them where it was...the colleague no longer works here'.

‘My disability is treated as a joke by some’

‘No consideration for the sometimes sensitive nature of casework. I contend with loud music, tantrums, personal phone calls being made despite me being on the phone to constituents, I could go on’

‘Colleagues are often dismissive of differing opinions, whether mine or constituents'. People who express opinions on specific areas pertaining to e.g. ethnic groups or other minorities can be derided or ridiculed, where conversely, colleagues can deride other groups (in terms of weight, economic status, mental capacity and travellers, for example) freely. Overall lack of consistency and fairness in conversations around equality’

‘Local councillor has made reference to my job online and alleged poor performance’

Working with Parliament

‘[A visitor] started making racist comments about 'boats' and 'them people'. I was unable to cope with the statements and fled to the toilets and recreation area and did not return until he left the building. This was raised by the OM and the [individual] was removed from our account. At an online meeting, where I was asked to share my experience, I felt the response from [their employer] was more encouraging and understanding than from the response from House Authorities.

… I was eating lunch in the shared rec area with my colleagues when a person from the neighbouring office joined us and started making what I consider racist and hate filled statements about 'illegal immigrants'. This time she was challenged, but I felt that again, in my down time, I was being harassed (possibly unintentionally).

I raised these incidents subsequently…[at a meeting] attended by parliamentary colleagues) that elicited a response from a white male colleague ; that this should be expected and we should grow a thick skin…I was shocked that this attitude was coming from within the parliamentary community. I …[have] never experienced this level of hatred and racism…I also had stated during this meeting that I had heard racist comments from callers, who assume that I am white’.

“There really is no proper induction. Very little training on the use of systems. For example, an expense system you just have to figure out for yourself. IPSA is principal concerned with regulation monitoring standards and I think it’s populated largely with ex civil servants. I never feel that there is any real appreciation that they have of our job. This gets exhibited in a number of ways. For example, they thought that training would be easiest for us on a Thursday or Friday because our MP wasn’t in Parliament. The busiest days for us in the constituency or when the MP isn’t in Parliament because not only do we have our job to do but we have to be with him making visits meeting people

et cetera. These are the worst days for us for training. A small thing, but it demonstrated to me that there isn't much understanding in Ipsa of our weekly work.

'The really awful part of the job which I had not appreciated when I took this role on, is the amount of money the House of Commons borrows off you as the office manager. Ipsa provide us with a credit card (if you are a proxy for your MP) but no facility to make any BACS payment or have a standing order (for example to pay for software licenses and wifi). This means that as Office managers we have to pay upfront from our personal accounts or on our personal credit cards and then claim the money back afterwards.

'The pay settlement for this year has not gone down well. MP's pay is going to be raised by 1.5%more than their staff. We are told that the public would not countenance an increase in MP's budget, but they seem to believe at the same time that the public will be okay with a larger increase for MPs.

Younger members of our team who live in London are barely getting by. I tried to treat us all equally in terms of pay. I believe we all make an equal contribution. I have had to increase the salary of one of the London based staff. His skills are hard to get in the market and we are not paying him in Market right now. To fund this increase in this coming financial year, I will have to drop my hours to get the additional budget I need to pay the others. I am not the only office manager in this position'.

Working with constituents

'Abuse on social media accounts is off the charts.. No body should really have to deal with those threats. It's appalling for democracy and I worry it radicalises individuals to take action. To be honest, my anxiety and mental health has worsened'

'When liaising with constituent's [who] flirt inappropriately - maybe once a fortnight. I have also been the subject of an open case of harassment…'

'The unreasonable behaviour is displayed by members of the public and can manifest as aggression. Our office is highly visible and located in an area with high footfall on the high street'

I am invisible to him. On occasion, if I have spoken to somebody during a meeting/visit (small talk), he appears visibly annoyed that I am engaging (i.e. it is all about him, and I should remail silent and in the background).

Tried to speak about workload and demands for 2 years but get nowhere so don't bother anymore

I do not feel supported emotionally in relation to the pressures of my job, as they simply don't understand it.

I often feel dismissed when I have raised concerns before so I no longer go to them when I have emotional concerns

My manager is based in Westminster and so fundamentally does not understand the volumes of work that we process in the constituency office or the quality of work. This means that our work is often undermined and members of my team are not recognised for their hard work

I don't have one

I had 4 office managers in the space of a year due to the nature of the work environment. There was no stability and none of them supported me adequately in a HR role

As the Office Manager the only person to be a "line manager" would be the MP and with limited contact and very busy workloads it would be unfair to burden them with any problems I might have.

Whilst not always available, he has always made time when I have made clear on the few occasions I urgently need a 1-2-1 discussion.

I'd really like a peer mentor. They don't have to be somebody that's been around the block. In many ways someone who is in the same boat would be prefereble.

Pretty self-sufficient - Chief of Staff is not very hands-on, but know that we could address issues if needed.

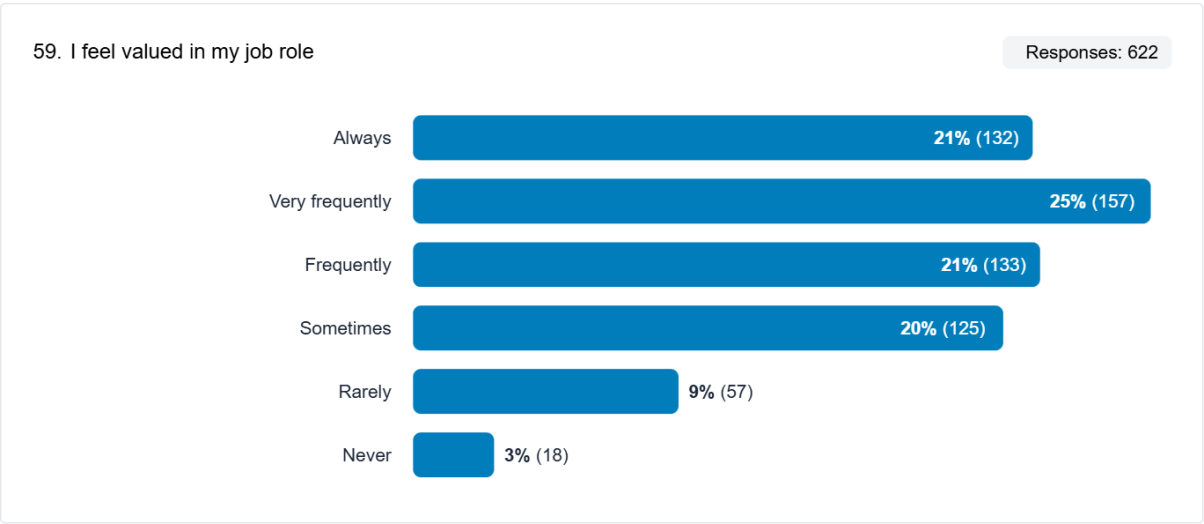
My current office manager is great

I am lucky to have an excellent MP employer

My office manager is very understanding of the pressures of my role, however my MP likely is not.

I feel lucky to work for such an understanding MP. But, I know that isn't true for many others.

No understanding from the MP of the pressures of the job, including the volume work and emotional pressures with complex cases

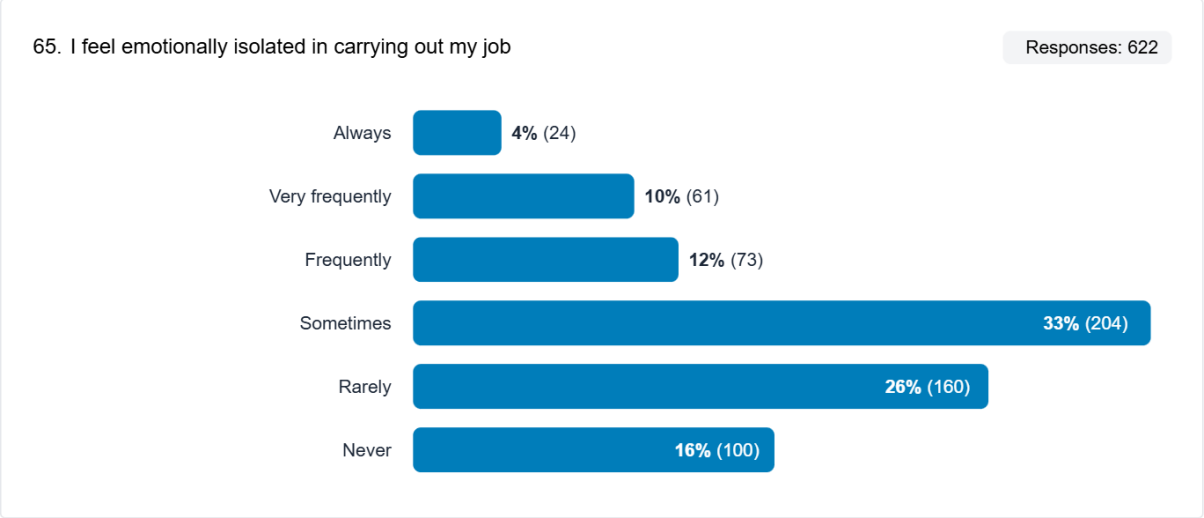


I am praised and encouraged.

I receive positive feedback from my colleagues, line manager, and from my MP, all saying how valued I am. However, I am paid minimum wage, and I perform duties far above my pay grade, so I don't feel as if I am actually valued.

The MP frequently expresses their gratitude for the work that the staff do, and will take us out for a meal occasionally.

5 years with no opportunities for progression, talked over by inexperienced members of staff. I rest my case.



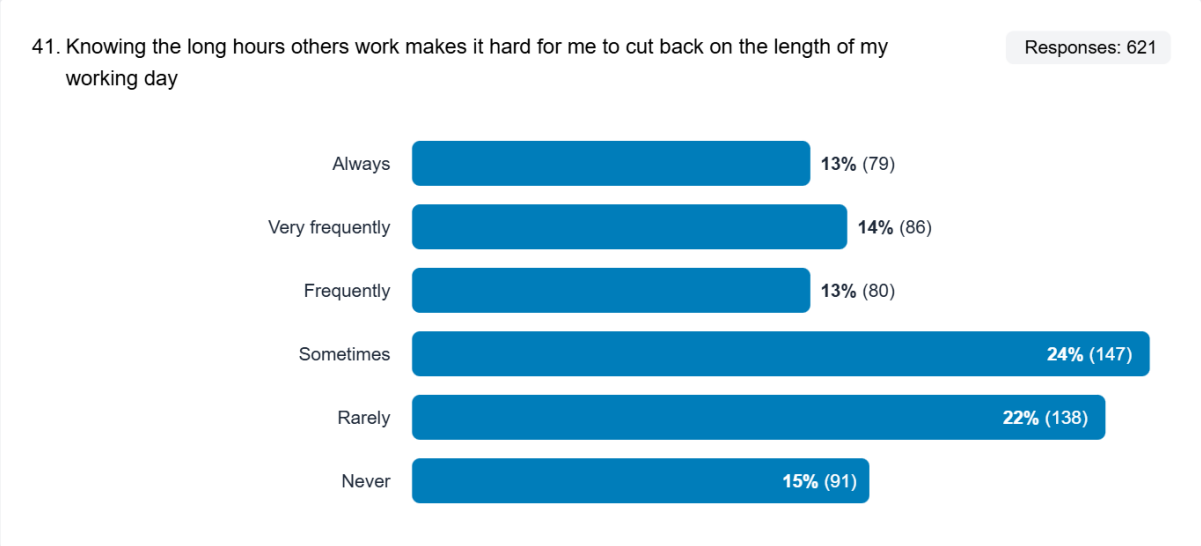
Nobody to talk to about how I feel/what I am struggling with...feel absolute loyalty to MP and therefore inability to be anything other than 100% supportive and full of praise outwardly. Could really do with somebody to ask for advice/support on how to deal with difficult behaviours. It is a very lonely job!

I have a good support network in the form of the immediate colleagues that I share an office with, but struggle to talk to friends and family who either do not understand

The buck stops with me, there is often no escalation path past me.

My friends have no idea why I am always tired or withdrawn.

Workloads, working hours, skills and pay



‘I encourage colleague to go home and take lunch breaks! And I try to lead by example.

‘I'm disciplined in working my contracted hours.

‘Our office looks after our working hours very well and everyone in the constituency office does their contracted hours and there is no expectation to work more. If we have to work more hours due to events/special cases, we can take time off lieu.

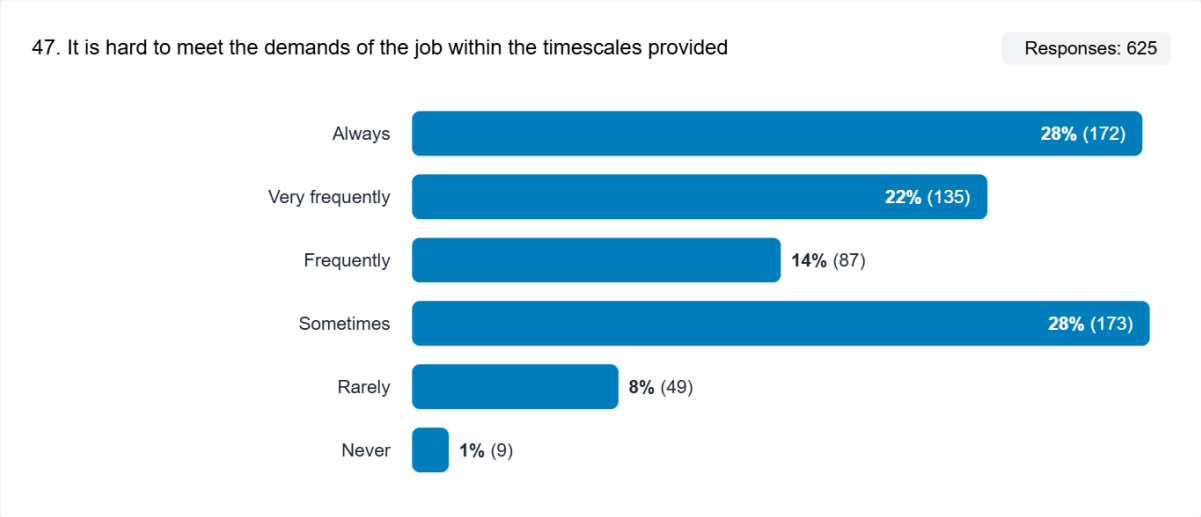
‘[MP] has agreed that whilst overtime is available, it should be very much my choice as to whether I take that option.

‘All of my colleagues work beyond their contracted hours. If we did not do so, we would not get the work done.

‘I reduced my working hours 2 years ago, and I am still doing the same amount of work in less hours and for less pay.

‘It is to do with the amount of work rather than other working practices. Although, we have an unhealthy long-hours work culture in our office (set by the MP).

‘Always start early and finish late. This isn't a job you can do 9-5 with current resourcing. I often eat lunch at my desk. IPSA will challenge this by saying MPs don't use all their staffing budget but MPs don't want to be seen claiming for the full amount available - even when it is needed.



Perceived reasons for increase in workload:

The sheer amount of work we do is often too much. In January 2026, our office handled 2.5x the correspondence of January 2025, and we had 3x the casework (almost 1,100 individual cases).

'I'm told that the staffing budget for MPs has increased 75% since the onset of COVID to cope with the increased workload, but the volume of correspondence has continued to grow'.

'Not through fault of management, the pace of the industry often means things will have to be prepared with minutes notice, or that something you have been working on for weeks or months is now suddenly useless'.

'Casework is busier than ever and doubled since GE. Despite this, IPSA does not recognise in pay the work we do. Again, it is research and communication who get paid more, but for less work demanding work.'

'With other services on their knees everyone is coming to their MP in desperation. The move to online has also caused some of this shift as people can't get through to a person who can actually fix their issue anymore.'

Coping (or not) and waiting times for constituents

'We do not have enough warm bodies to deal with the volume we receive, and some people end up waiting months for a response to simple queries because we're having to divert our limited resource into helping those in immediate need'.

'Our OM has been understanding with timescales in place for the volume and capacity of the casework team but we are probably at the very edge of acceptable timescales now which isn't good for constituents'.

‘Constituents are encouraged to have reasonable expectations and some will have to wait if we are very busy - we are not an emergency service and we don't have magic wands!’

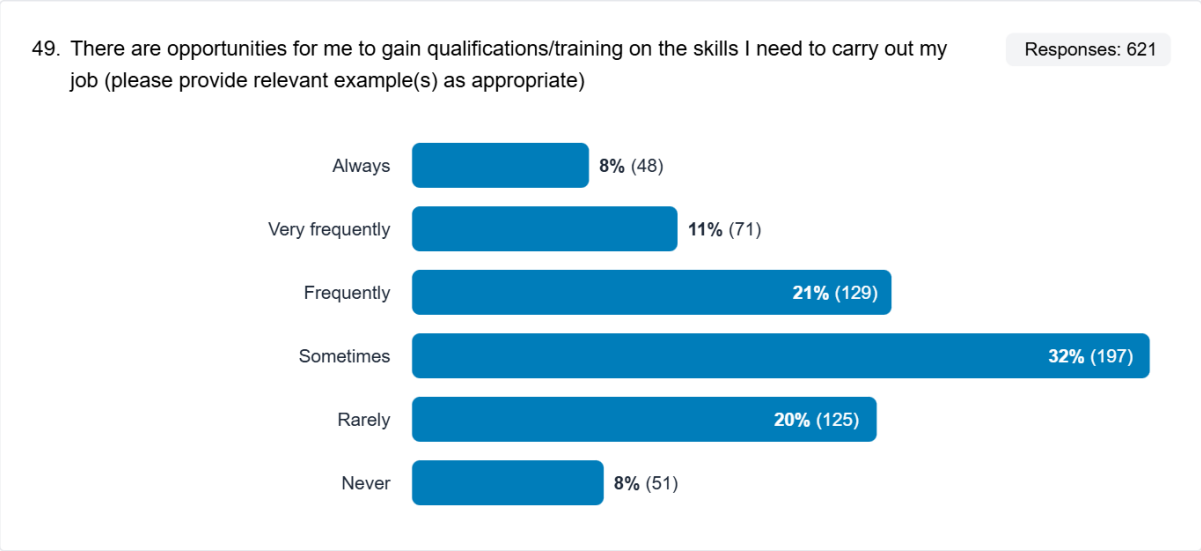
‘The level of casework is not possible to keep up with. We are putting new processes in place to turn people away but we still feel a duty of care to people in desperate situations’

‘I am employed for 20 hours a week and there is not enough time to do my job as the only caseworker that deals with [type of] cases. I regularly work 40 hours a week and still cannot stay on top of the amount of work. I have ended up having to work when I am on annual leave’

‘In the last 2 months our team of 5 have received over 5000 actionable [pieces of] correspondence from constituents. That is, frankly, absurd and doesn’t include diary, socials, comms, speeches, research, etc, etc. It’s overwhelming’

‘I would say impossible. And I worked in the world of performance-driven utilisation rates and cost centre consultancy for many years before becoming self-employed’

‘Office Managers are often the safety net for unforeseen surges in work, and nowadays they are thinly stretched’.



243 respondents recorded qualitative comments on this. 61 mentioned lack of time as a key factor why they did not attend training; another 18 referred to budgetary constraints and casework (9). It was acknowledged that in-house training is free, however staff would also like the funding to sample external providers too. In-house processes/providers were named: ACT (28); Library (15); House (10); ‘excellent’ (5); MMSST (2).

Recognising that the training offer had improved over time, there were reports of positive experiences: ‘The training is excellent and much appreciated. At the beginning,

I was not given time to do it. I book it now when I can as it helps develop my expertise to help constituents'; 'The training put on by the library is great'; 'There are training sessions available on most of the things I need. I am aware that Parliament is offering more professional development opportunities'. That said, not all experiences have been positive, e.g. 'Asked training in working with victims or in a trauma informed manner and unavailable. Have only done one really useful day of training in almost 5 years'.

Budgetary constraints were clearly influencing uptake of training too: 'It would be great if there were a dedicated staff development budget to facilitate outside opportunities… we use all of our staff budget on salaries to max out capacity'; 'Office budgets are such that training has to be very cheap. The one formal training course we were able to take on was poor quality and overly expensive'.

Encouragement to do training was also evident, e.g. 'There are lots of restrictions on what IPSA will decide is suitable training, but my MP is kind enough to fund his/herself training s/he believes is important for our development and job satisfaction'; '…[my] office manger is always supportive of any requests for further training'. An alternative approach is to cut corners in providing training: '[Training/gaining qualifications] has never been discussed with me. Instead, I am required to give training to other colleagues of my knowledge on top of my tasks. Line management is not in my role'.

However, for many, there was a Catch-22 experience: 'There are training opportunities but I feel so weighed down with the caseload that I am often unable to prioritise training which is highly counterproductive'; 'This is an all hands on deck role, there is no time for taking a day out for CPD'; 'There are lots of opportunities and we set aside budget to allow for specialised training, however capacity to put time aside to attend training is a challenge'; 'Good training offer from Parliament. I have agreed a ring-fenced training budget for myself and other staff in the office but have not had the opportunity to spend mine'.

The role of high volumes of casework is clear in restricting time to attend training, however this difficulty can lead to considerable pessimism about future prospects: 'Caseworker is the deadest of end jobs: no qualifications, no useful training. You are just as unqualified coming out as you are going in'. The impact of limited time due to competing (and urgent) work commitments is influencing turnover, e.g. 'I am currently working my notice period…largely due to the fact that I have been offered a job which is willing to fund externally recognised qualifications for me, to help me grow in my career, rather than just internal training. I often feel that because this role has such a high workload, I get stuck in loops of doing the same things over and over, and am unable to actually grow or progress because the organisation is not large enough to have real development or progression opportunities'; 'There are no opportunities for job progression or development in this role'; 'I have no idea how to translate these skills or this environment into a career'.

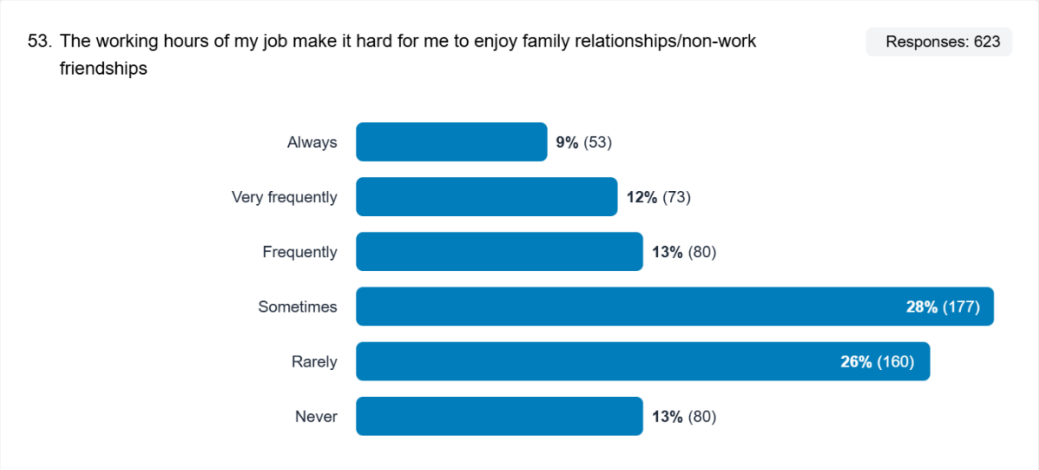
Similarly, some individuals find that frustrations in obtaining funding leads to paying for this themselves, e.g. 'I undertook a counselling course for my own personal gain. However, the skills obtained I have been able to use in my job e.g. dealing with suicides, etc. I would like to go onto to do a...counselling course at a significant cost, but I would have to pay for it as it is not considered to be part of the job I undertake or in my job description'.

For those able to make use of them, courses accessed via ACT appeared well-received although these are perceived as targeting an audience of newer starters, with little to engage the more experienced staff: 'I now feel that much of the training relates people who have had less experience, new starters etc., so is not relevant to me'. Equally, 'there are a lot of courses via the House, but not always the topics that would be helpful' and '...MMSST do not provide relevant L&D for managers'; 'feels a tad like training courses do not fully understand the day to day running of constituency offices'.

Other gaps in provision or access to training were noted: 'More Data Protection courses should be provided by the House. The MP (Data Controller) is expected to have a Data Protection Officer. Other than the basic GDPR/Data Protection course offered by the training there is nothing else'; 'Sometimes the ones I would like to do, e.g. on advanced parliamentary procedure, are limited only to House staff'.

Only one staff member seemed aware of moves to develop a relevant qualification for those working in the role, although there was expression of an appetite for this, e.g. 'A formal HR qualification would be beneficial to demonstrate many of the skills I am already adept with'; 'If there was [the] ability to gain proper accreditation, I would consider it'.

In highlighting the need for economies of scale and efficiency, one respondent suggested, 'A guide to casework would be helpful to set out parameters for new staff and offices. Each MP effectively does this and creates their own processes but this means there could be inconsistent approach across the UK to how MPs deal with constituent contact'.



I was unable to take my full annual leave entitlement, and nor do we routinely have work mobiles- so it's almost impossible to switch off. Frequently contacted out of hours

Cancelling dinner plans, on my laptop at weekends when should be with partner

I frequently work a 65 hour week. I often come home to my partner being sound asleep.

I frequently don't go out with friends because I'm either working, or am too tired to go out.

I don't go out much and this is because of the job - this isn't a complaint because I do enjoy my job and I feel like I can cope with it, as long as I have the weekend to recharge.

I think I manage my work/life balance well. However, work does become a priority at times

The unpredictability and late working because of sitting hours are prohibitive. Many MPs don't come in for the morning - and don't realise

I am expected to drop everything last min very often, and if I have plans it is looked down upon.

Previously I was expected to be working until 10pm most days including Friday evenings. My family had to tell me to put my foot down, it wasn't fair on me or them.

I struggle a lot more to fit in quality time with my teenage son and my partner. I find I'm too tired to shop or cook in the way I did before taking on this role so my diet has got considerably worse, and I spend a lot more on takeaways. I often come home tired and emotional and don't want to do anything social, and cancel plans quite frequently.

My MP often complains of being tired, overworked, not having a personal life — and this is implicitly in a way the fault of those who manage [their] diary, support their work, deliver the projects the want, all of which mean they are tired. It doesn't feel acceptable to speak about the pressures that we face as staff - even when we regularly work far longer hours than the MP.

Conscientious employees often find it hard to leave when there is so much work to be done. My colleagues do the same. It's a constant battle to not do more hours than I (we) are employed to do when we know that there is so much work to be done...Its difficult to switch off sometimes. To be clear, my MP insists that we do NOT work over our hours and tries to pull ever lever to make sure that we are well supported. Again, casework is under funded. It should have specific funding.

For example, on Friday evening I was supposed to go out with friends but because I received a message from the MP after 5.00pm, I continued working until 7.30pm and missed the evening with my friends.

I work extra hours, through lunch breaks and still cannot get my work done. I worry about this outside of my working hours.

I really struggle balancing the job and being a single parent to a toddler

I often carry work home with me mentally... I don't have time to sustain friendships or relationships outside of work

I try really hard to not work ridiculous hours as I know this will just make me ill

I feel that I give my all at work and when I get home I am exhausted and don't have much left to give me family

My family want me to quit my job as the feel I am disrespected and unappreciated by my MP despite all of the hours I give my role.

It takes me almost 2 hours to work and back home and I earn just above the minimum wage with no London allowance, even though I should be getting it. That speaks for itself.

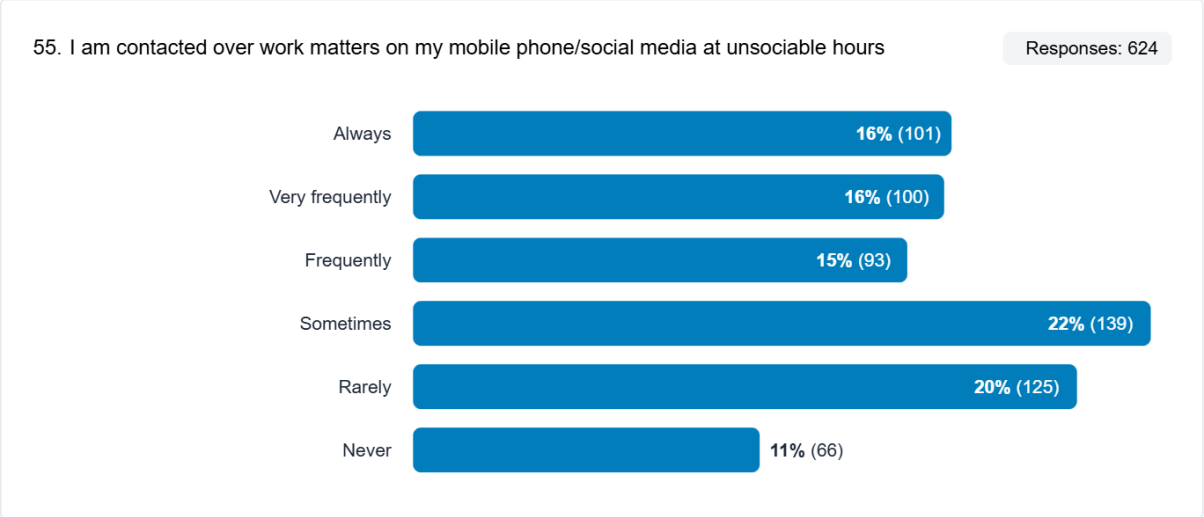
I start work-related activities at 7 and stop at 7. 12 hours including commute and such. I'm so exhausted by the time I get home... leaving 2 hours in which I'm very tired to try and fit my whole life in. How am I meant to have hobbies? To socialise? To relax? To improve myself? All in 2 hours, when I'm already miserable and shattered? How can I ever do that? I am so drained, I'm worn down to the bone. I can't take it any more.

If we're not responsible for the resources we're given to succeed, and we're not responsible for the demand put on those resources, then ultimately when regular failures arise due to the lack of resources, then it can't be our responsibility...

My Chief of Staff is very conscious of work/life balance and frequently tells us to go home when we have worked our hours.

Although I am good at officially logging off around 9-5, I am regularly receiving messages from WhatsApp, Councillors, people in the local area who know what my job is

I keep boundaries in place as much as possible - meaning where something does run late/go out of hours, it is the exception rather than the rule.

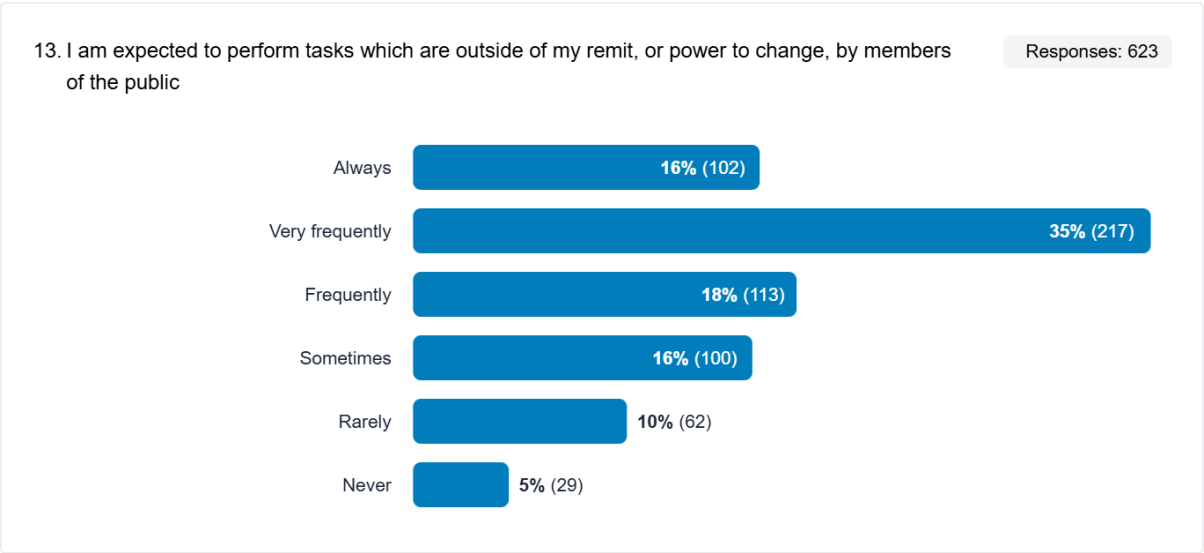


The House should supply all staff with a work mobile along with their laptop.

I am contacted by my Member throughout the working day, in the evenings and over weekends. Whilst it is not expected most of the time that I action or respond to these, it makes it impossible to switch off

I have put boundaries in place for this purpose

I've received emails at 3am instructing me to cancel meetings at 10am the following morning. I've received Whatsapps throughout the night and chosen to mute the chat so I can sleep.



‘It's amazing what people think an MP can do.

‘The public have little concept of what is in the remit of an MP. Rather than being a point of escalation, we are often the first point of contact for problems.

‘AI seems to be promoting unrealistic actions for constituents

‘Absolutely. Hard to not take personally when unable to help a member of the public even when replying on behalf of the MP. Expectation from public to reply within 24h - unachievable. MP is blamed for not responding but hard not to take personally as you're the one actually getting through the inbox.

‘It is important for MPs to set clear expectations on what we can do, timeframes for a reply and request that we are treated with respect. This does not happen in our office as our MP will not put clear timeframes on our auto-response and expects us to reply within unrealistic timeframes.

‘If a Constituent is unhappy with a response, irrespective of the time that has been put into the case and the efforts made on their behalf, we can quite often be 'threatened' with a change in vote.

‘The MP and [their] office are regularly being treated as a social worker. We are plugging gaps when social work or third-party agencies can't support or don't have capacity to do so.

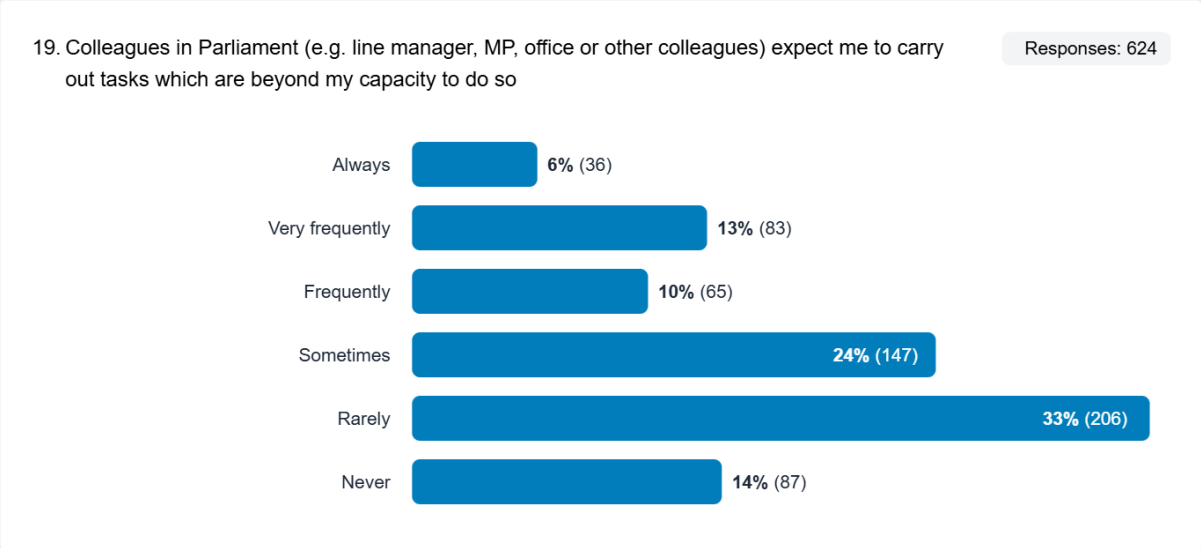
‘Some constituents are very rude and demanding. If you try to signpost them to a more appropriate form of assistance, they will shout and say that we are useless.

‘We are often contacted by Constituents suffering from mental [ill] health who feel suicidal.

There is office manager training and I have done it but ultimately you learn best on the job - I don’t feel I need much more training!

In July 2024 we were all thrown into a new situation and had to find out how to do things as we went along! I am not alone in this and found support through other new colleagues.

Nothing prepares you for setting up a new MPs Westminster and constituency offices, recruiting and onboarding a completely new team- without any induction or training. Baptism of fire



Perceptions of opportunity and challenge

'My MP is an excellent employer and is very aware of not asking me to complete tasks outside working hours or beyond my capacity - but does give me responsibilities which I think help with my personal development

'My team have a good understanding of what is possible. We are all eager and very capable people who achieve a lot in a working day let alone a week.

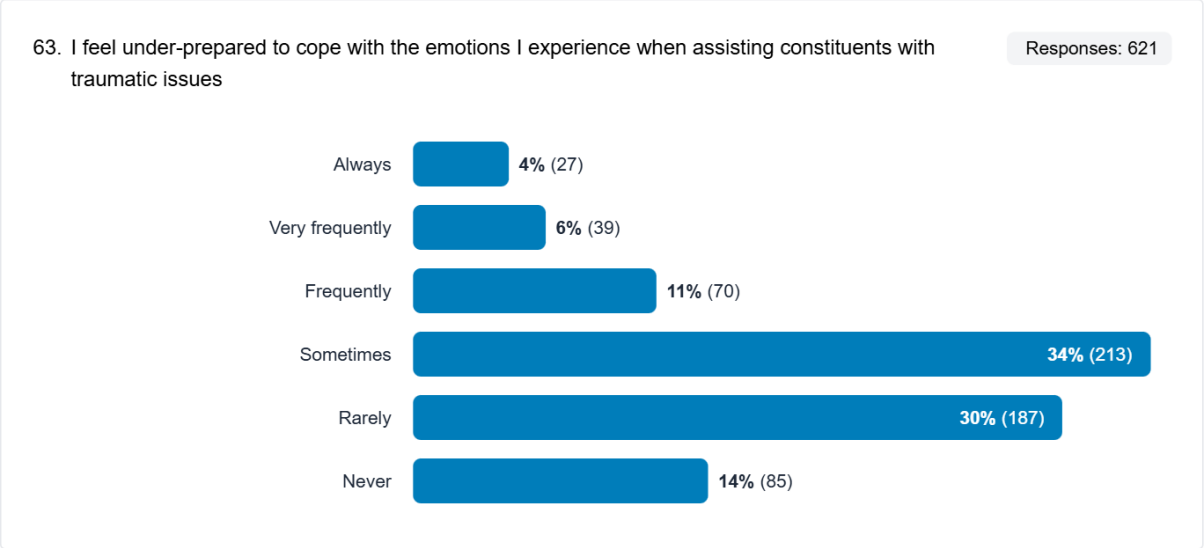
'...office manager is brilliant - we all share workload as there is always too much to do so we help each other out. throughout the years have taken on the workload of staff who have left and not replaced without pay rise due to lack of funds

'There are huge expectations to do more than you are paid to do (hours worked etc)

'My MP seems never to be satisfied, particularly on the communications/PR front. The quantity and quality of our office output (across all areas) is far greater than many other offices and all staff are working at capacity (or above)

'I work as efficiently as possible but my member has big ambitions and a big capacity which I and the team can't match

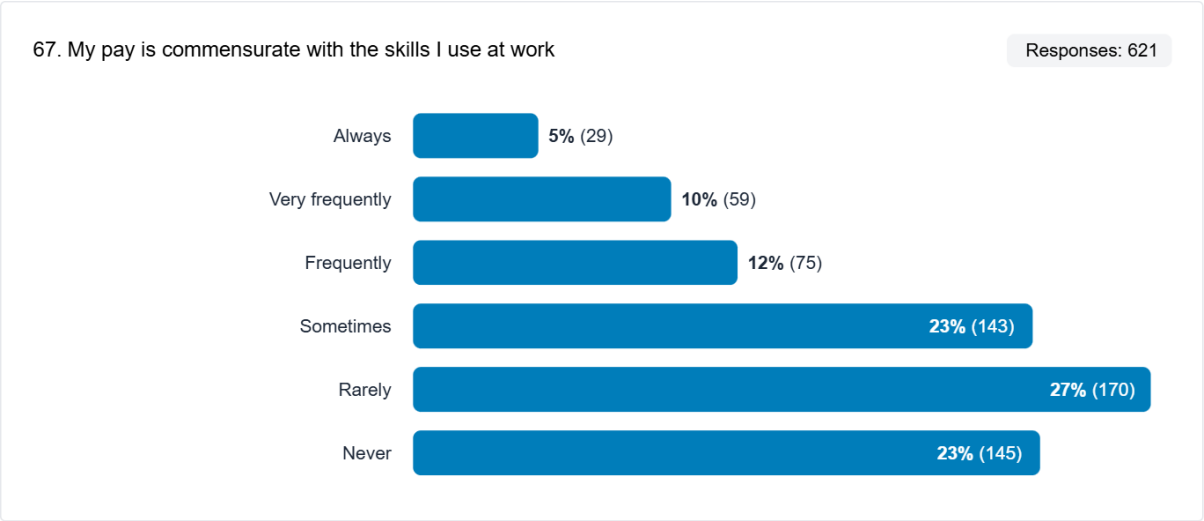
'No recognition of hard work - if you do a good job they then just give you more work



I have experience working in emotionally difficult settings but colleagues less so, there is some training for this but it needs to be continuously addressed with staff to ensure they can manage, things also change quickly in this setting due to local/national issues

My own mental health is not as good as I would want it to be, so the emotional pressure of the job can be occasionally overwhelming. It can be difficult to distance yourself from situations, and it can be hard not to empathise with some of the more desperate cases we have without being drawn in.

I am an experienced worker always attend available training and I do feel prepared from my background working in 3rd sector mental health



‘I am effectively doing the job of the MP when they aren't here but my pay nowhere near reflects that

‘Luckily [I’m] not financially motivated!’

‘Pay could be better; however, IPSA refuses to give ample budget increases. The new rules around limitless reward payments make no sense when baseline budgets are not enough to pay everyone adequately.’

‘I do think that MP's are very conscious of expenses and the reaction of the public. As a result of this, I feel that MP's keep the wage bill as low as possible and many staff are underpaid for what they do.’

‘I have an undergraduate degree and a postgraduate degree and graduated nearly 10 years ago. I am still paid like I am fresh out of university’

‘MPs staff are the worst paid and have the least trade union recognition of all staff associated with the House. Current gradings do not recognise the significant political and policy knowledge which is required within an MPs staff team

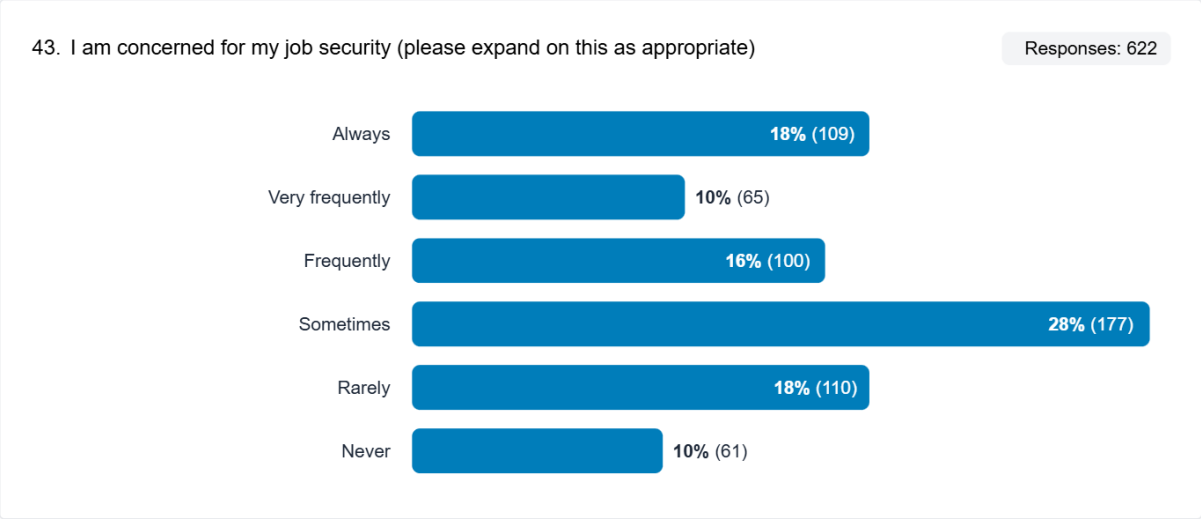
‘I am making on average £15 less than my counterparts in the private sector and yet I deal with much more challenging and emotional issues. Living in London I feel this difference

‘I am on the equivalent of living wage. I cannot live on this wage. U have a second job in the evenings which makes me very tired But I could not pay for basic household items and food without this

‘…most office managers can't understand how anyone is expected to do this job less than full time. I am submitting expenses claims from home at 11pm!’

‘I don't work for my MP for the salary. I work for my MP because I believe in her’

Job insecurity



In a job where the next General Election can result in job losses, staff are naturally sensitised to further risks to their employment. This was the question evoking the single largest response from participants in the survey (324). ‘I understand that the role is only

available to me for as long as the Member retains their seat. The general feeling of instability and calls for a General Election do worry me'; 'my job is linked to my MP's health and well-being, if something was to happen to them that immediately impacts my job'. However, some respondents viewed the threat of job loss differently: 'I took the job knowing this so my future plans take this into account - I am not worried about job security', versus, 'I would love to be made redundant from this job. It's the biggest mistake of my career'. Resilience was evident in other ways too: 'It feels like we are fighting for our jobs with each piece of casework at times, because local reputation will play a huge part in whether we are still employed'.

Anxieties were evident in differing ways. For example, some related to worry about their employer's anticipated behaviour : 'My predecessor was let go and my hours have been reduced'; '...concerns that my line manager may blame me for her mistakes to the MP'; 'Using probation as a scare tactic stresses my out constantly'; 'bad experience with MP trying to relocate me (something happening more frequently on the advice of HR!!!!)'. The use of fixed term contracts and probation periods requires careful monitoring.

From an office manager's perspective, there were clear concerns for the impact of job loss on others: 'the impact of losing staff, making them redundant and closing years of work down does take its toll'.

Worry based on current political polling was also clear, e.g. 'The nature of the electorate and seeing voting polls suggests our MP wouldn't get re-elected in the next General Election so I expect to be out of work at that point'; 'The political threat from [political party] to my MP and polling predictions for the next GE do make me concerned that, following this, my office - and all MP's offices local to where I live - will be of a party that I could not work for and that likely would not consider hiring me either'.

Concern about tangible issues after job loss is also prevalent: 'I will likely lose my job. I don't have enough information about what happens then (e.g. how long will I continue to be paid for, what support will I receive)'; 'there is no transfer from an outgoing to an incoming MP, and as such we cannot expect to remain employed in a parliamentary context'; 'I have finally at the age of XX found the job I have always dreamed of and I wish it could go on until I retire!'; 'Even knowing it may be 3 years ago it is something I think about most weeks or thinking of ways to try to plan for other back up options if the MP did lose seat in a few years' time'.

The impact on job progression is also felt by staff who are keen to devote their careers to Parliament, e.g. 'if I wish to increase my pay or look for promotion, I am left with no other option but to seek a higher paying role with another MPs office as my team is already full', or indeed to leave and find better paid work: "I could be earning more elsewhere given my experience/qualifications. My boss knows this and it is not their

fault, given tight staffing budgets. Unfortunately, it is likely that I will have to look for other jobs outside of Parliament soon as living costs are so high'.

A positive suggestion about how valuable experience can serve the ongoing needs of both Parliament and constituency workers was proposed by one staff member: 'I have built up really good knowledge and experience and training via IPSA and MMSST and all that experience, skill and knowledge disappears with the MP leaving office. IPSA / MMSST could develop a more formal 'post MP' function where experienced Caseworkers don't disappear into the ether. 'Staff' retention must be a huge cost to IPSA / Parliament and I think they could do more to utilise the skilled experience staff they develop via Parliamentary Training etc.'. Another staff member offered this advice to Parliament: 'it may be helpful to provide guidance on CVs and information on what jobs former staffers move into after leaving an MPs office'.

There was also a call for consistency in how jobs are brought to a close: 'More days should be given to clear offices out, and there should be standardised advice about HR… some losing their jobs earlier and some being kept on until November as there was [varied] interpretation of the rules'.

Causes for concern:

MPs' and manager behaviour and procedural concerns

'My Member of Parliament has openly recruited for my role before making me redundant or speaking to me as well as disclosing confidential information to other members of staff'

'I am not on a permanent contract as my job is dangled in front of me every year based on performance making job security very difficult'

'Because of my disability I feel that I may be made to retire. The MP already has asked me when I am going to retire'

'Feeling that nothing is every good enough for my MP (who is constantly triggered and reacts to negative social media comments, or perceived slights). [They] react to this and takes it out on me - I feel at the whim of [their] reactions, makes me feel constantly uneasy. I spend a lot of time protecting staff from such behaviour'.

'By raising concerns and querying procedural issues and things like GDPR, as well as the unfairness of only 2 out of 5 caseworkers having to deal with safeguarding cases, I am concerned for my job'

'…it felt slightly unsettling knowing that information about my job security was shared with an outgoing colleague without being shared with me'

'I always feel like I am being micromanaged, so that any little error I make can be held against me and then put me on probation again'

Lack of support

‘IPSA budgets also make it impossible to plan year to year. I would honestly have thought twice about taking my role had I realised how unprofessional and unsupported the role of MPs staff is. And there’s a lack or real progress. Coming up for two years, I’m contemplating what next’

‘Our long-term service benefits don’t carry from office to office, if a snap election is called and my boss loses their seat, I won’t qualify for the full support even though I’ve been working for MPs for over 3 years’.

‘If the MP suddenly decides to stand down or loses at the election then there's no consideration for their staff, we should be guaranteed some sort [of] payment or support to find a new job’

‘It will be difficult to get employed should my MP lose [their] seat. Those working in Westminster can quickly pick up roles but those of us in the constituency are left to fend for ourselves. Needs to be a fairer way to apply for roles in these circumstances’

‘When the 2024 GE was announced, I realised that if they were not returned, I would be awarded just £300 in compensation, despite having worked for the member for over two years, because I was part time’

“…when IPSA benchmark MP staff roles against other comparable roles in the Civil Service or House Service, they never look at the whole package - we don't have DB pensions and we don't have job security that CS, House staff, and even IPSA staff themselves benefit from’

‘…pay is far lower than similar civil service roles with very limited pension. Effectively longer hours, less security, little pay, less reward’

‘It is disappointing we aren't on the Civil Service Pension Scheme. Civil Servants have the benefit of an amazing pension and no perilous job security. MP's staff should at least get a good pension given they could lose their job at any moment’

‘…as I’ve worked for less than two years, I would have no redundancy, even though I would be made redundant or lose my job from no fault of my own. It’s really hard and if they want us to stay and commit to the job and do our best then it doesn’t make us feel good. Some of us have families and mortgages to pay for’

Impact on mental wellbeing

“My anxiety goes through the roof and I feel physically sick. During an election period, I usually work my full days at work and then spend my evenings and weekend campaigning. It's both mentally and physically exhausting. I'm terrified of losing my job as I don't know how I will pay my mortgage and other bills’.

‘I am very aware that my job will only exist while the MP is in their seat, which looks decreasingly likely by the day. If I stay in Parliament until they are voted out then my ability to gain work in other sectors is lower, but if I stay, I have a higher chance of working for a remaining MP from my party and would be paid redundancy. This leaves a great deal of uncertainty mentally, and ultimately means that for the purposes of life planning, working for an MP is not sustainable’

‘We've already had one staff member leave due to job security concerns’

‘I am frequently told I don’t understand politics, so this makes me feel like I have no job security’

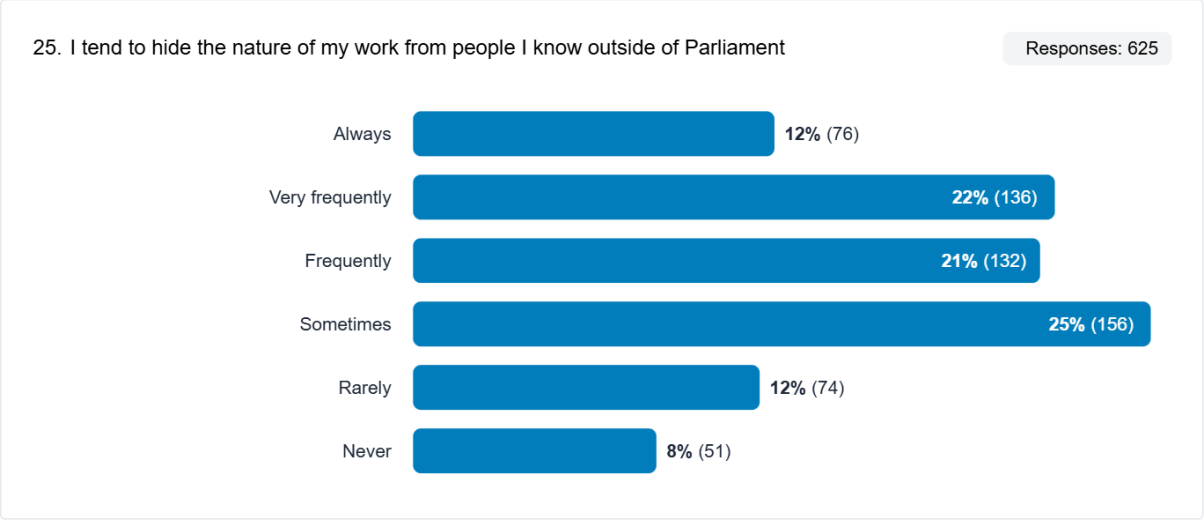
Family insecurity

‘I hid my pregnancy for 6 months as I was on a 6 month contract on the basis it would be extended under good performance. If it got to the 6 month mark and they weren't happy they could give me 2 weeks notice to leave. I managed all my symptoms in private whilst working full time in parliament, running around after the MP, contacted at all hours and expected to do overtime whenever to ensure I would have a job to return to when I come back from maternity leave’

‘I cannot travel to Westminster as I am a carer for my disabled child, so it is very difficult to consider what will happen if my Member does not get re-elected’

‘I was made redundant and was pregnant. Immediately rehired by next MP but lost my maternity pay. Systems now changed to prevent this but nonetheless I am v[ery] angry about this’

Safety



Reasons for hiding nature of work

‘I prefer people not to know what I do, partly for security reasons and partly because I don't want them to approach me with casework or comments about the MP!

‘I take exceptional pride in it. I would not, however, openly discuss it with strangers, or those I don't know directly.

‘The number of safeguarding referrals I have had to make is increasing, as has the number of 999 calls I make due to a constituent threatening to end their life.

‘I have received adverse reactions in the past when I have disclosed my role, including longstanding friends who have avoided me since I started this job

‘I am afraid of the backlash of negative comments’

‘This is to protect myself from awkward, intimidating questions I can be asked.

Peer pressure

‘The mocking and teasing feels a bit too much! My parents' friends are also winding them up.

‘I've had friends and family say I should resign over decisions made as it would be the moral thing to do

‘…the assumption is that you will align politically with the MP, have the same opinions and are steeped in politics.

‘Sometimes I have been targeted by political opponents’

‘Although most people are okay with it, some people get angry or upset and try to intimidate me’

‘I am proud of the work I do, so I don’t hide it

Strategies for hiding nature of work

I am careful to whom I reveal the nature of my work. If someone asks, I will just say that I am a secretary, and if they ask where I work, I will deliberately misunderstand them and say "Oh, in the town centre".

‘Particularly when I’m avelling on my own, on the train or in a taxi when they ask what I do for work. I don’always feel comfortable or safe being honest.

‘I live in the constituency I work for. It would be madness to tell everyone and all what I do. People conflate those who work for politicians with politicians and the level of nastiness and would be too much to bear.

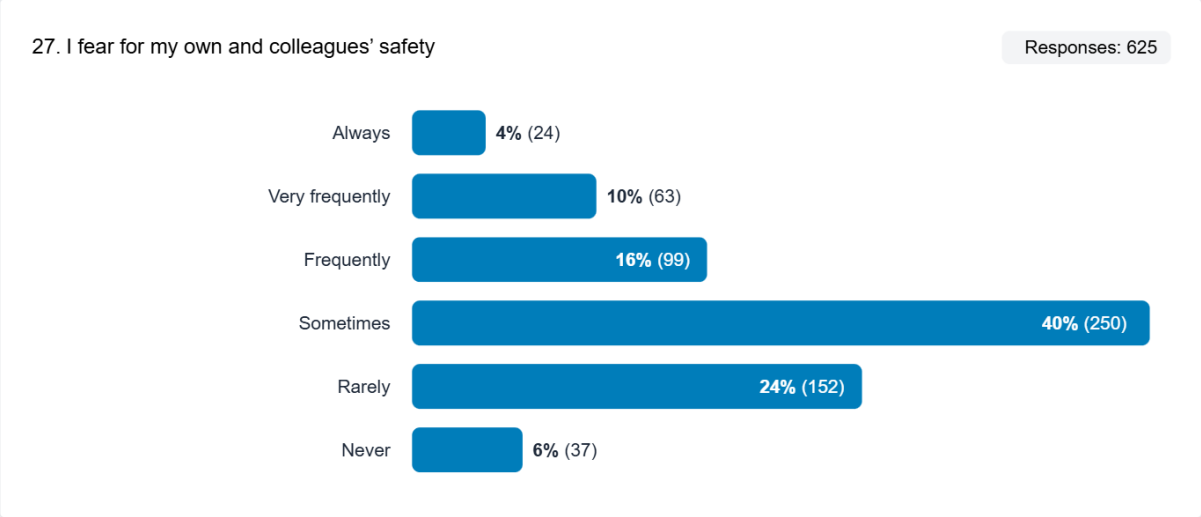
‘I regularly lie to people about what I do for work.

‘I only discuss the nature of my job with my friends and colleagues who work within Parliament or the politics more generally

‘I always say I am a Civil Servant’

‘I also use a slightly different name on social media to avoid the risk of being targeted

‘Discretion is key in this role



‘…no one knowing where the constituency office is does help: I fear for the safety of colleagues in other constituencies who are constantly at risk by working in public facing offices. The stories shared are really scary.

‘I feel very responsible for my colleagues' safety and we make use of the operatives provided. We chose our current constituency office based on feeling safe while at work

‘As an OM, I ensure that staff are not put in risky positions in carrying out their duties - staff safety is always considered and prioritised.

‘Our office has a High Street location and we have had some horrible experiences. I tend to enter and leave through the back door.

‘I have been attacked by a constituent who tried to strangle me. No action was taken as he was deemed to have mental health issues; I had death threats from a constituent and took him to Court and he received a custodial sentence… This has not stopped him sending emails and occasionally telephoning the office but I do not engage with him other than to say he needs to email the MP direct.

‘I have had multiple incidents with constituents at the constituency office where I feared I was going to have to use force to defend myself, though successfully de-escalated the situations

‘Angry telephone calls from people who don't like the way that a Member has voted, for example, may necessitate a call to the police, but then we may turn off the lights and draw the blinds to hide that we're in the office in case that person turns up.

‘Occasionally we have angry people at the door, but only let them into the security corridor

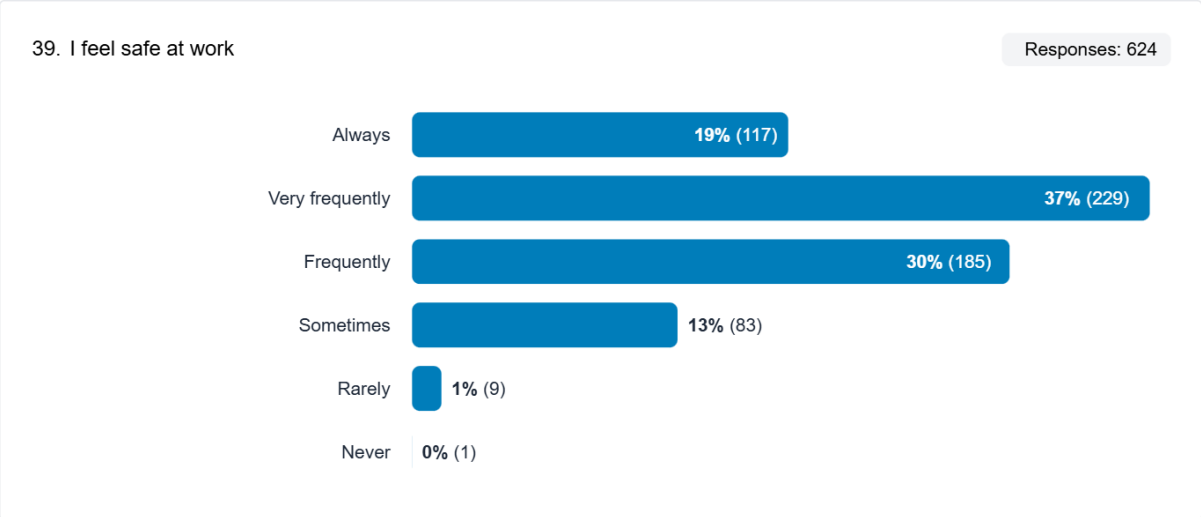
‘We also have security at our advice surgeries which helps make me feel more secure

‘Less so now that we are in super offices which have alarms, separate points of access and panic buttons located in the office. I am very aware however moving between the office and where I park my car

‘I am responsible for the health and safety of the office. I am extremely worried that if something happened it would be my fault.

‘My MP went against advice over security of staff

‘We don't have great security in our office but it is being resolved (slowly)



‘The office is secure with cameras and we have personal alarms.

‘I feel safe in the House of Commons, but nowhere near as safe when I'm working in the constituency office.

‘I feel safe working in Parliament. When in the constituency office, I hold safety concerns often because we are expected to have an open door policy despite this not being explicitly stated.

‘I feel safe in Parliament as a system, but the building itself does worry me. Our office is in the palace and the window literally fell out once. Not convinced that won't happen again. It feels like they are waiting for someone to die before we do something about the building.

‘We have a sign on our office door saying that we don't accept cold callers and that they need to ring for an appointment, but this doesn't stop people hammering aggressively on the door and screaming through the letterbox. This happens a couple of time a month.

‘Office is fine, but at surgeries etc, I am more nervous

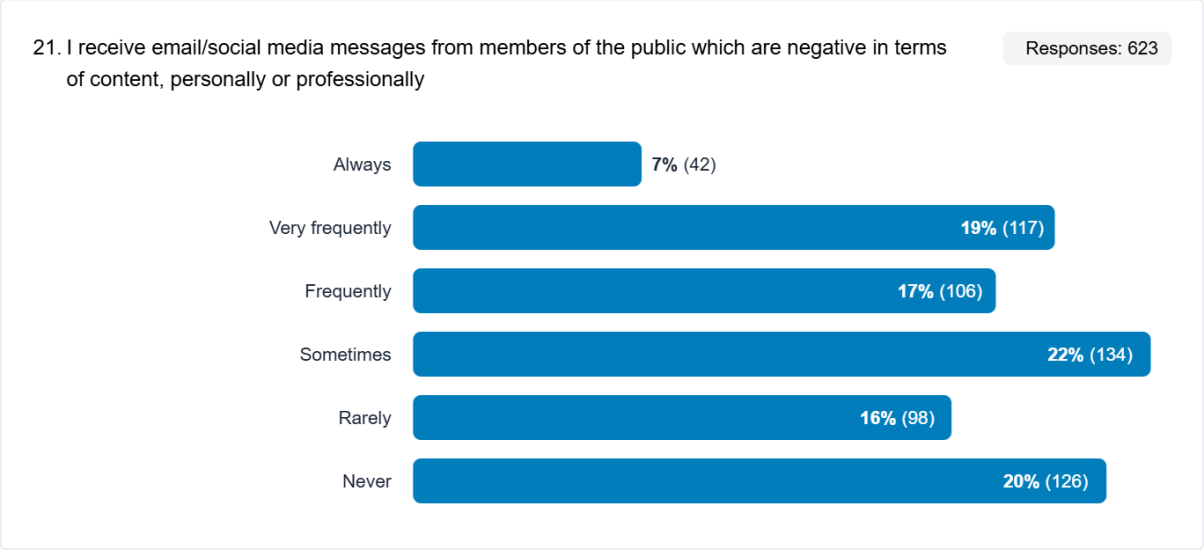
‘Leaving Parliament on days of protests can leave me feeling nervous, depending on the protest - most are fine.

‘The office has been attacked in the past, and I do always have to double check when entering/exiting the building which isn't ideal especially if its dark

‘The threats are daily

‘I feel safe inside the building but I don't feel safe when leaving the building to go to my car. There are often gangs…hanging around and we see drug deals taking place at the back of our office on an almost daily basis. We do keep reporting it to the police and we do get periods of increased police activity which result in a week or two of peace, but as soon as the police move on elsewhere, the drug dealers come back. We recently had a gang of men at the back of our office, who were inhaling nitrous oxide. They were screaming and shouting, and rocking my car and I felt very frightened. I rang the police but they didn't come out.

Negative social media communications



The role of social media in facilitating abusive language and threats is well known. 149 respondents provided additional feedback on this item including references to and examples of the following: personal (51), negative (36), abuse/abusive (32), threat (8), racist (5), misogynistic (3).

However, there are positive examples where this is not always the case: ‘I work for an MP who's very hard-working locally and who's built up a really good reputation with [their] constituents despite being newly elected, so it's very rare that we receive negative correspondence. I appreciate that this is unusual!’ Many offices delegate the task of monitoring the MPs’ email and social media account, so that the Office Manager or another colleagues sees what is aimed at their MP: ‘our main email accounts can be a bit of a cesspit’; ‘Not always directed at me but I have the MPs social media on my personal phone and am in charge of it so I see all of the negativity. As well as negative casework and email. not pleasant at all’.

The psychological toll is apparent, whoever is handling incoming messages: ‘… as the senior manager I deal with hiding or blocking the worst of these which can be quite emotionally draining’; ‘Listening to constant negative 'rants' from angry people has a demotivating effect’; ‘It is soul-crushing and I have to work hard to remind myself that not everyone I meet thinks or acts like that’; ‘It’s really upsetting when people have a go at me for not achieving their desired outcome, especially when I have spent hours and hours of my own time doing research and trying to figure out a way to help them’.

Both individuals and offices take steps to protect themselves in an online environment, ‘Since working for an MP I do not engage with social media and I have ensured my profiles are hidden to mitigate any potential abuse and doxxing’; ‘I only use my first name in any correspondence to constituents’; ‘The inbox is fielded by our office manager so she protects us from the really negative emails’. These are supplemented by office approaches: ‘We have strong guidance on not responding to abusive, threatening, discriminatory or spam’; ‘We have a good Behaviour Code - and we are increasingly having to use this when communication with constituents’.

There is understanding of the reasons for negative communications, ‘very occasionally from people who are in a desperate state’; ‘Constituents have every right to strongly disagree with the views or actions of their MP. The tricky bit is when they are aggressive, threatening and / or abusive’; ‘People often lash out as we are one of the few organisations that they can get hold of’.

Responses vary with practices that range from acceptance that dealing with hostility is part of the job to assertiveness: ‘I think our office needs to push back a lot more. We do not at all. We should not have to put up with it. Some MPs are great at calling people out on social media or on email’; ‘As the office’s manager I shield the team from abusive, rude or unreasonable constituents or team members ask me to contact these people. People can be very personally abusive and this is increasingly an issue’.

Public perceptions of politics contribute to the hostility witnessed, alongside the role of long-distance social media: ‘organised campaigns where hundreds of people flood the comments with short responses such as "idiot" or "terrorist sympathiser" or suchlike.

We've given up trying to block them, otherwise we'd spend all our time doing that and not actually helping constituents'. There is a trend of politicians and their advisors no longer being seen as human by the public, but instead as a verbal outlet for the mix of emotions the public feel. Often, when you meet the person in person, they have a very different approach to you'. Sadly, there were examples of in-person as well online abuse as illustrated below.

Areas of concern:

Threats to staff, including expressions of prejudice, discrimination, online and offline abuse and death threats

'We have had many threats in recent weeks and have had to liaise with Bridger on these'

'I and our team receive daily abuse'

'I have received multiple direct threats both on face to face and on social media. I have also had personal information, including my home address, disclosed online and have received threats whilst out with my family'.

'I have had people try to intimidate me on a number of occasions, or when I have been unable to get an outcome they want, they will throw personal insults. I'm lucky that I can brush it off and have thick skin'

'I have previously been abused on social media for working for the MP with various damaging accusations. As a young woman, this is not conducive to the need to increased representation of women working in politics'

'I have received threats which have been reported to local police and Operation Bridger, personal insults, questions regarding my ability…'

'….often report abuse, racist, islamophobic and misogynistic to the Police and have spent time giving many a formal statement to Police - this is continuing to grow'

'I deleted Facebook and locked down the privacy settings on my Instagram…I have received messages condemning me for working for the MP I work for- it is…personal'

'…[I] am called a fascist, a child killer, a waste of space, a waste of tax payers' money, a useless female, plus more. It is water off the duck's back now. just part of the job. The Member receives all that and a lot more'

'I had xenophobic social media abuse about my surname from a member of the public, who implied I claimed benefits because of my name. I've never had this before and it tracks with the rise of Reform'

'I have had people state that as I am white they do not want to talk to me, told I'm a woman so I am a useless secretary and they do not want to talk to me but only the MP.

With years of experience and expertise in the role… I often leave work feeling deflated and question whether I want to work in this field any more'

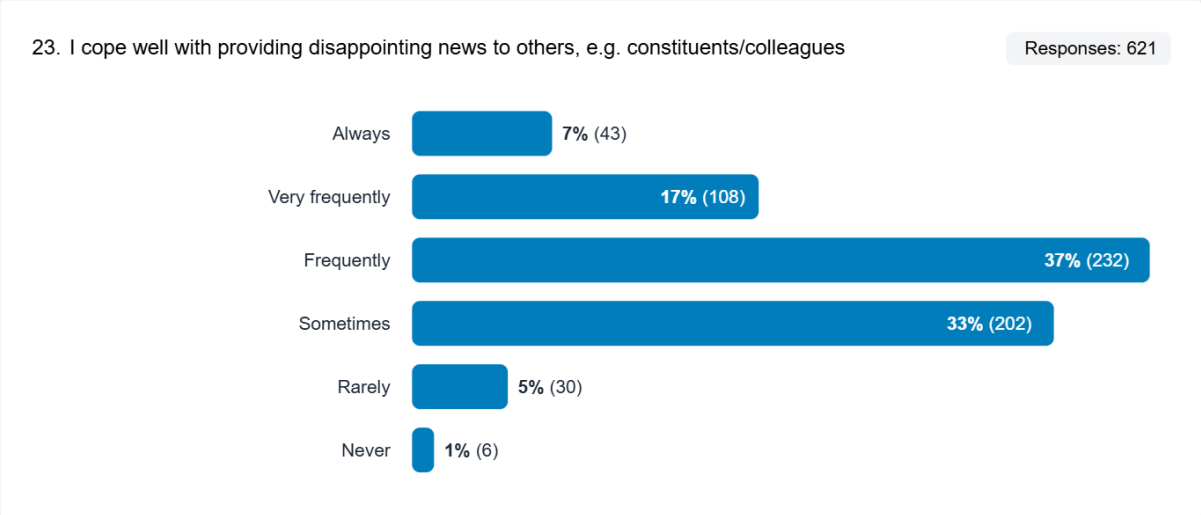
'Information can be found on Register of Interests and has been used to contact staffers in the past'

'Constituents know our names when they have contact with us through casework, and if the case doesn't turn out well, they can make comments on social media'

'…there is ongoing abuse being directed towards the MP and that our [colleague] is dealing with this on an ongoing basis. As office manager I have discussed with [them] regularly, as I am concerned that [their] daily tasks are affected by the ongoing negative input [they] see online'

'It is difficult to turn off notifications for [MP's social media] apps/accounts outside of working hours as that would involve switching them off for my personal accounts as well. I get notifications of pictures of nooses, vile comments, death threats, abhorrent language. Whilst they're not directed at me personally, **it is hard to relax outside of work, knowing my phone will 'ping' with a death threat at any moment.** The MP is not logged into these accounts and does not receive the notifications'.

Emotional labour



'This is part of the role - not fun, but necessary.

'A stage of life thing as I bring experience and empathy.

'No one likes delivering disappointing news but as long as it is justified there is not a problem.

'When you have worked closely with a Constituent for a long period of time it can be difficult to share bad news and it can be upsetting. You need to take a minute to breathe

or walkaway, let it wash over you before you can shake it off and get on with the rest of your day.

‘I'd phoned to share positive news but the Constituent was suffering from a mental health episode and used the phone call to vent her frustrations at partner agencies.

‘Can be difficult dealing with sensitive casework.

‘I do not enjoy this part of the job and will seek support from a colleague to ensure that I have done the right thing and have made sure to be as polite and understanding as possible to the constituent.

‘I manage my expectations accordingly and have worked hard to set boundaries due to the upsetting nature of the job and the difficult cases I work on.

‘I have had to become like this or I wouldn't be able to survive in this role. It makes me feel guilty and wonder if I'm normal that I am able to shut off feeling distraught most of the time.

‘I have had to do this too much. More than is healthy. I am now ill.

‘Yes, our job is to reflect our MP and their views on things, not our own

‘Whilst my role is not as a political appointee, the job in itself is inherently political, so we are expected to toe a party line. We are also expected to engage in party mechanics, and attend party events/training, which are often designed for campaigners rather than parliamentary staff.

‘My MP and I have pretty much the same world view and rarely disagree. However, there are times, particularly if I am face to face with a constituent, where I have to maintain a 'poker face', such as when I had to deal with the family of a rapist who felt that his imminent deportation was unfair and wanted the MP to get it stopped.

‘I have to write in the tone of the MP, my views are mostly aligned but understand that it will never be 100%

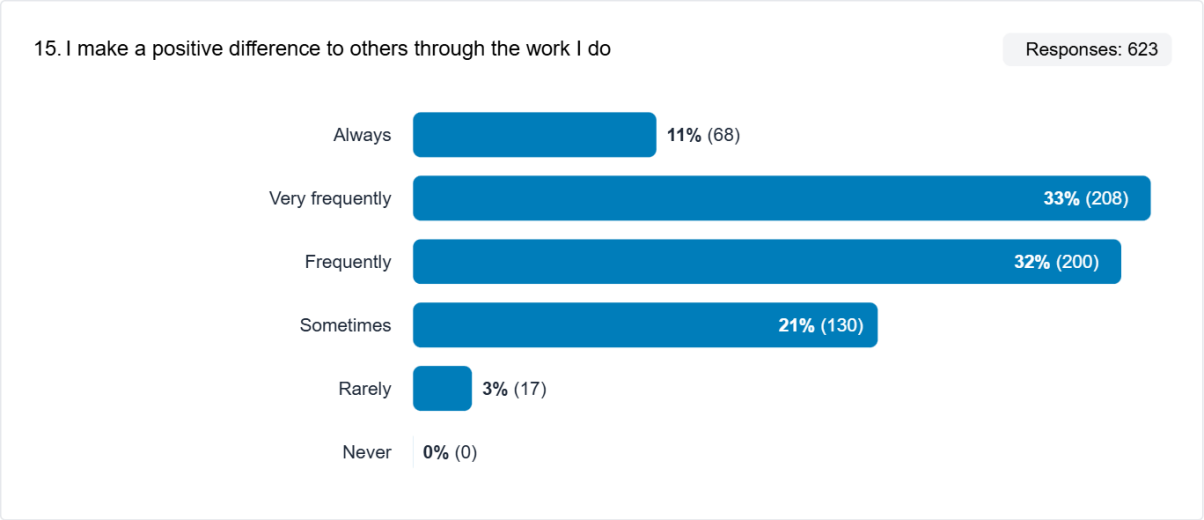
‘The MPs choice is what I portray in correspondence. Sometimes I don't agree with this but it is their final decision.

‘I sometimes feel like I am just 'going through the emotions' and have to switch off my own political beliefs or feelings at work.

‘This is a minor frustration of the job but yes, this happens occasionally.

‘I cannot display emotions I do not feel - I believe I am honest and straightforward with everyone - which constituents appreciate.

‘Many of the constituents in the office I work in are absolutely obnoxious…If I were to tell many of them what I really think I would be sacked immediately.



‘This is maybe the most rewarding job I've done

‘I know the work I do helps others

‘I believe I am making a positive contribution to constituents, individually and collectively, and to the country as a whole.

‘The only thing that keeps me going in this job is knowing that I am changing people's lives and my team are too.

‘When you have supported a constituent or worked on a campaign that has actually delivered policy change that you know will have a massive impact across the country there is nothing more rewarding

‘I don’t think that we have the power that some people expect but we enjoy the challenge of adding value in whichever we can.

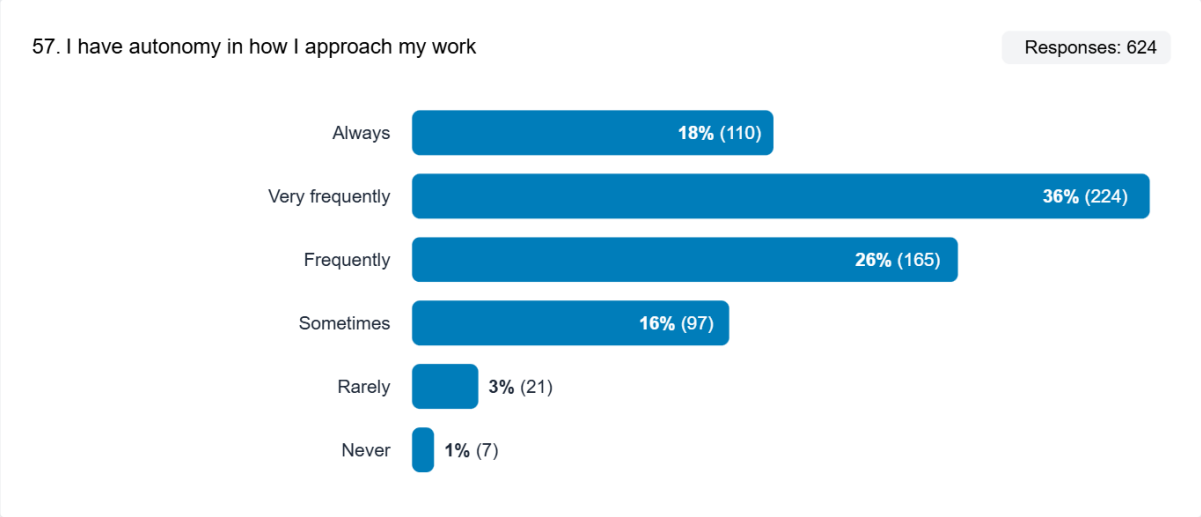
‘I would hope so. Have to count the small victories. But division in politics and social media means only negativity is present. Could organise the most positive event to try and help people - there will still be the usual suspect ready to bring the event down with criticism and negative comments. Again - not aimed directly at the staff but the MP, but hard not to take to heart.

‘I always try to help our constituents in whatever way I can, but often their expectations of how we are able to support them are often unrealistic, and so many are disappointed with our responses.

‘Limited by how willing local authorities are to respond to correspondence

‘It's disheartening to note how many organisations fail to acknowledge emails, take months to reply and often don't reply at all

Coping with the job



‘I am left to get on with it - no micromanagement which is a good thing.

‘Complete creative control and freedom

‘My Member has full confidence in me and my ability to run the office in their absence.

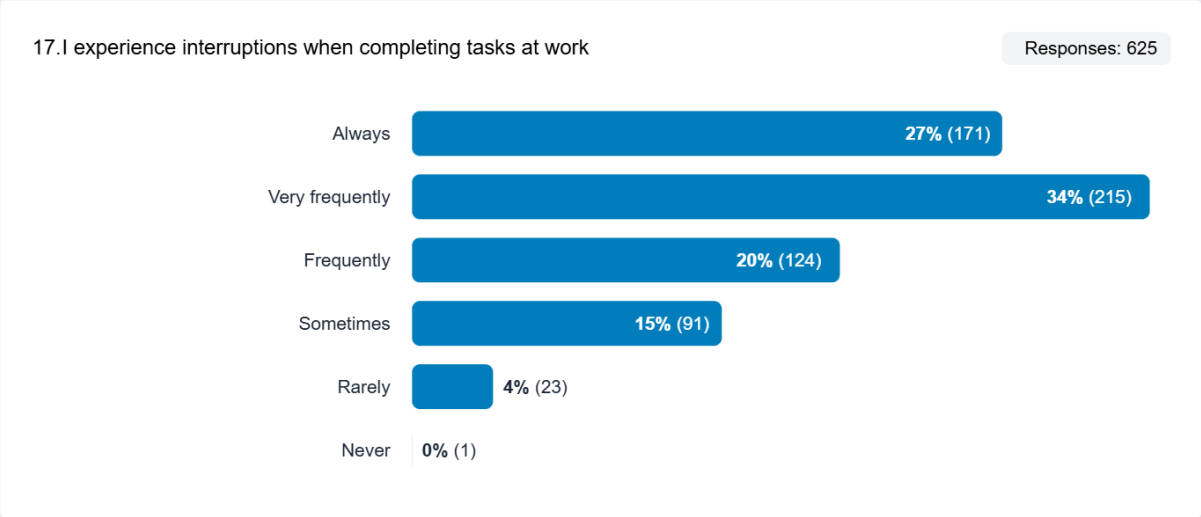
‘It exists on both sides of the spectrum, but never in the middle. Sometimes I have total control and sometimes I am micro managed.

‘I am mostly left to prioritise and plan my own work though occasionally the MP decided to intervene.

‘Autonomy within reason - there are protocols and procedures that make sense

‘X micromanages to an hilarious degree; I've learned to ignore it

‘As office manager, I am generally free to manage my time and how/when my tasks get done. My MP is not prescriptive in his approach, which is generally a blessing.



‘I do not see this as a bad thing as it is the nature of my role

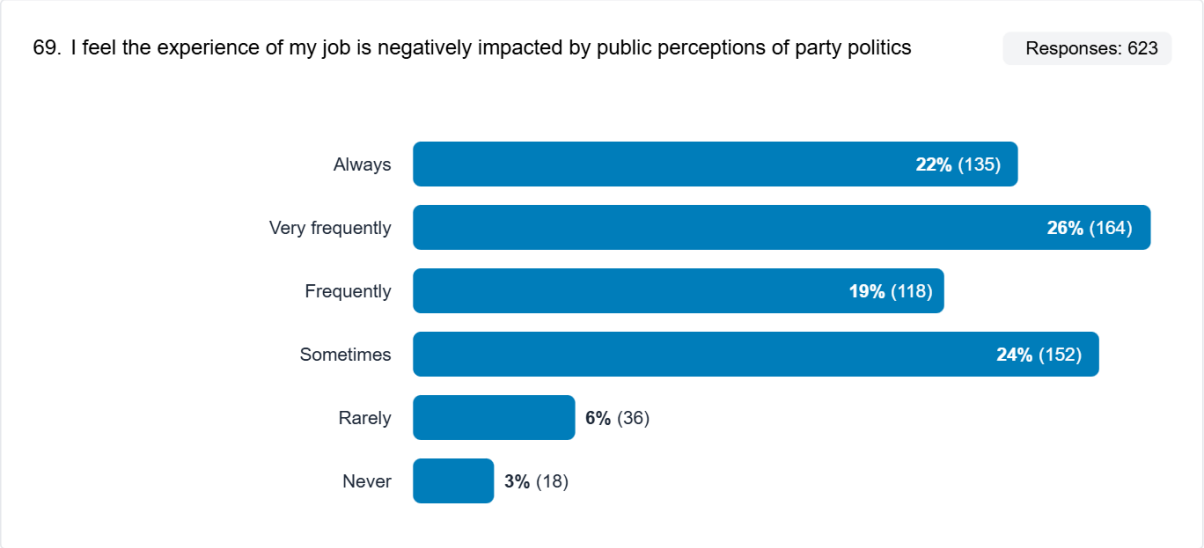
‘I work from home one day per week to try to have an uninterrupted period of time to get important, focussed tasks done

‘I find it hard to complete a single task without interruption and I work best when I am alone in the office.

‘More urgent things come in frequently but prioritising is part of the job

‘This is the nature of the role - it is unpredictable. Short notice 'urgent' requirements from the MP, changing national headlines/focus, reacting to social media. Also, staff ask for support/guidance regularly (appropriately)

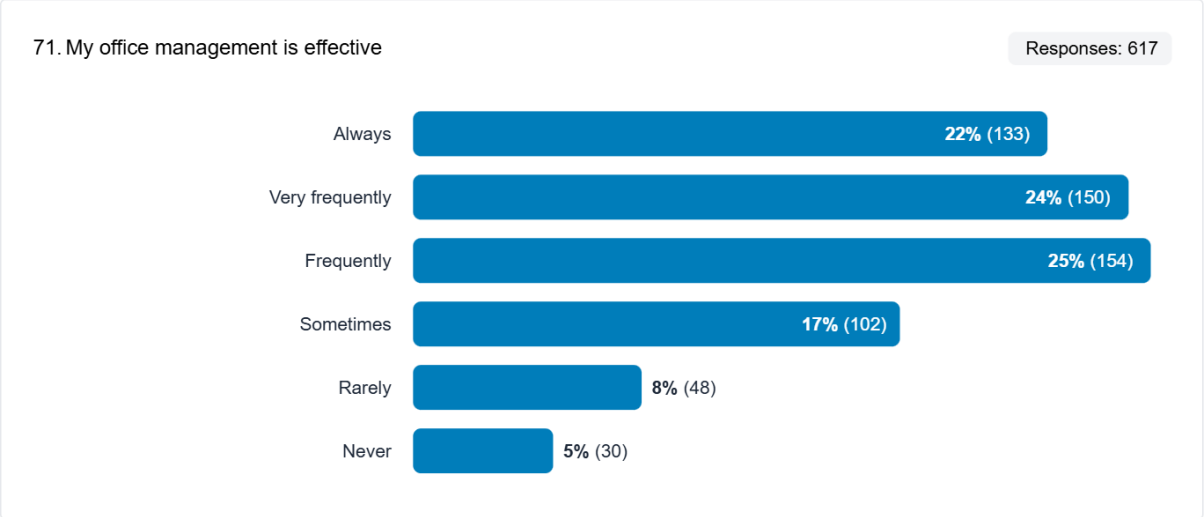
‘Often constituents believe we are large teams and we are only there to serve their need in that instant. There is a lack of understanding that most offices are 4/5 people managing constituencies of over 80,000 people, working in a Parliament with one of the biggest legislative agendas of any Parliament in the world and has the most sitting days of any European Parliament.



There needs to be resilience support for staff, some people can cope better than others but it is part of working in this field and could be talked about more

This is a huge issue.

A public misunderstanding of the work we do as legislators, and not party politics.

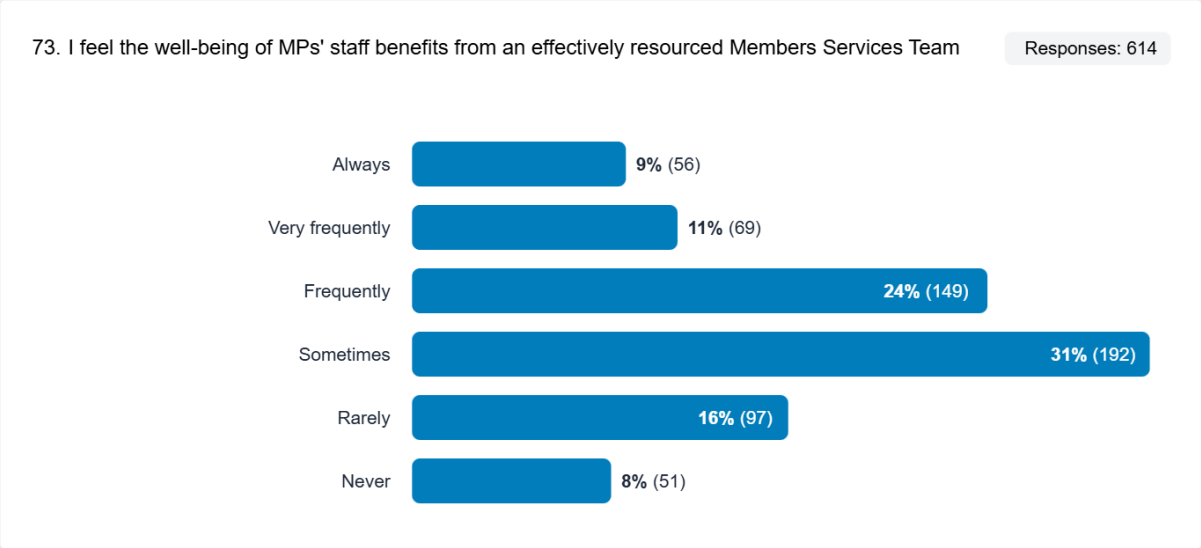


I am the office management!

Not the office manager but a toxic overarching management culture

We don't have an office manager, so the responsibilities are usually left to me.

I am the OM! But can't do everything I want to do because of time pressures.



‘There has been a reduction in the support that is received. It is now just signposting rather than trying to understand the problems and make cultural chance happen

‘The MMSST have been brilliant.

‘I have never heard any positive feedback from staff who have used them. The name alone implies it is there for MPs and not staff so many staff do not know they can engage with the services.

‘I have not had much contact at all with the members services team

‘The MMST are fantastic, but as the House is not the employer, their ability to enact change on our behalf is limited.

‘MMSST has been invaluable in listening to staff and putting into action various things which make our lives easier. There's excellent training on offer and now we have HR people who will help to advise staff’

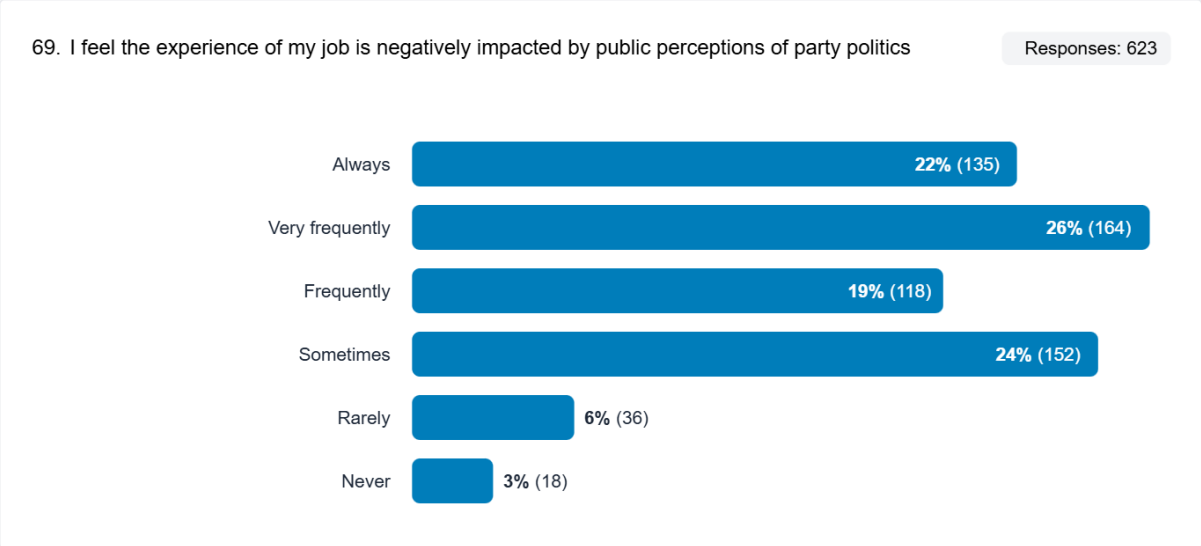
‘Mind blowing lack of understanding by MMSST and IPSA about the day to day realities of MPs staff roles

‘The central services are great and they are so much better than they were a few years ago. But I think it is still a struggle for people with a secure job, HR, a large workplace with departments to deal with issues, etc to really understand how tough it can be for a small group without that level of external support and such a high workload to manage day to day.

‘H o C Library is great, so are the vast majority of the talks and training. I felt part of something and very welcome and comfortable on the one occasion I attended H o C itself. The Speaker definitely cares about ordinary staff.

‘Many of my colleges don't know about wellbeing service and the things you guys can do, I have frequently told my colleges about the services and they are very surprised, would be great to be more visible or engage with Office managers.

‘As someone who has a disability it would be great if you get continued support from the disability team



‘This is a huge issue.

‘I agree with this sentiment wholeheartedly

‘I am not a party politically appointed employee, but the work of a staffer is impacted by the affiliation of their Member. Politics is so incredibly divisive that you are tarred with a generic brush based on perceptions of what you stand for based on your employer

‘There is so much negativity in the media, it feels like an uphill battle everyday sometimes.

‘It is always going to be. But I know what I do and why I do it.

‘I do my job because I genuinely want to help individuals, to take note where systems are not working, where our energy needs to do. I am not in my role to give policy headlines.

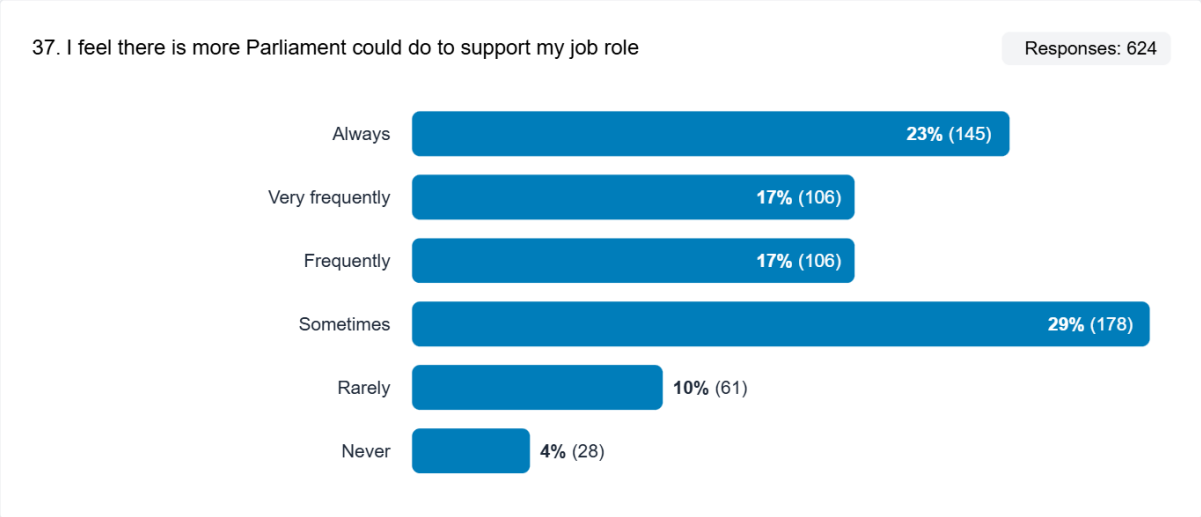
‘…sadly this has increased as party favour/fortunes and public perspectives has changed, despite the fact my role isn’t party political in any way

‘We have to deal with other political parties telling members of the public that we will not assist them.

‘I think sometimes the public have a low expectation of politicians, I always try to turn that round with their experience engaging with my members office.

‘A larger portion of the emails we receive are from people attacking party policy

What do MPs' staff want from Parliament?



259 staff offered observations on what more Parliament can do to support them. The following qualitative data are a selection covering the following themes, many with supporting rationale for proposals for change:

Approaches to Management

'MPs' offices should be managed by parliament to ensure proper employment practice. MPs should also have more staff to handle the extremely high workload.

'Remove line management responsibility from MPs and ensure a professional approach to supporting caseworkers with what are now routinely difficult and unreasonable demands from constituents.

'We need a centralised HR and stop the idea that a team of 6 lead by the MP is a good idea - they do not have time to run a de facto business hence why there are so many issues

'As managers we don't he anyone to do 1:1s with. It would be helpful if HR could mandate MPs to do this

'We don't have enough HR resources to respond when a team member is behaving poorly, I would like to go to the house as the office management don't do enough/feel uncomfortable to react seriously.

'...a HR department which was robust and neutral for the employees

'Advice and guidance on managing upwards - managing MP's expectations, behaviour and support when in this situation. Feel like treading on eggshells all the time so as not to damage [their] ego.

'MPs MUST undertake annual compulsory training on staff management, effective leadership, team building etc

‘I liked the idea floated last year by IPSA of mandatory training/accreditation for office manager roles - which values the HR and financial responsibilities we carry. If OMs cannot / will not undertake these responsibilities, they shouldn't have the title.

‘MPs are not provided training on how to be a manager/employer, and it is often at the detriment to MP staff.

‘Staff trade unions play a vital role in supporting staff in their job, but this is unsupported by the House and IPSA. Improved trade union recognition would greatly improve the support staff are provided with. It seems as though this survey and ongoing activity is used to provide MMSST more resource while ignoring the very thing, trade union recognition, which most effectively that provides support across the public sector, and beyond.

‘Parliament permits them to manage staffing, management and pastoral duties more or less as they please. In the absence of meaningful oversight and regulation, you get a huge diversity of experiences and no particular accountability.

Funding of staff and premises

‘The work in the constituency office has at least doubled since I started working for an MP and this is not reflected in the staffing budget. WE NEED MORE RESOURCES!!!

‘…let me pay the staff I have, more so they feel valued. Pay me more! It is quite frankly shocking, the work that I do for so little reward and I feel I am exploiting my team.

‘An IPSA or internal review of how MPs are choosing the spend that money could be helpful and a guide for say 40-75% of the being for casework could be useful.

‘Other professions that work the hours we do are on roughly double our salaries and better benefits.

‘I love my job and feel incredibly supported. I do, however, feel that progression opportunities and pay in Parliament are limited.

‘The volume of work is rising, but there is never a review on whether the staffing allocation needs to be increased

‘I am very frustrated by the late announcements regarding next year's IPSA budgets - it makes it very stressful and difficult to plan for April onwards - can we extend fixed term contracts etc?

‘The level of need and the complexity of enquiries and casework demands more resources than IPSA will provide.

‘Parliamentary staff are often paid more and that gives them the impression that they are more valuable than constituency staff.

‘Constituency offices who have higher workloads should be able to have more budget to bring in other staff. As caseworkers, sometimes it feels like you're drowning and it can be very overwhelming…obvs we want to do our very best for every person and feel bad when we don't that adds to that panic of trying to get to everyone

A community of all staff?

‘MP staff are often treated as second class citizens in their workplace, with the most basic of things requiring them to obtain permission from their boss, or regularly excluded from events and places without good reason

‘Working in Parliament, you quickly realise that MPs' staff are right on the bottom rung, with MPs themselves only 1 rung above; the House staff have far more privileges and it's always been like this. The best demonstration was when the late Queen was lying in state and special provision was made for House staff, including everyone from catering, to pay their respects, but no provision at all was made for MPs' staff. This caused a lot of lasting anger amongst MPs' staff.

‘The disparity of support provision from Parliament between parly vs constituency staff is genuinely appalling. My constituency-based colleague developed [a work-related physical condition] and yet IPSA refused to fund [adaptive equipment], or provide occupational therapy. Yet we were told by members' services that a parliamentary colleague would've received this support…[similarly] as constituency staff, I got wiped out by flu for nearly two weeks in December, yet my Parly colleagues had been able to access free vaccinations ahead of time.

‘Parliament is very Westminster focussed, constituency staff are often forgotten about

‘Parliament often feels like a million miles away rather than in the same city because as a constituent worker we are often left out

‘Feel as though a lot of the events in parliament for constituency staff are absolutely pointless

‘Events to take place around the country to make them more accessible. Westminster events to be more evenly spaced throughout the year and more notice given so those in constituencies can plan and attend

‘I am aware of support in parliament but had bad experience of the services on multiple occasions…[I] have been through tough time in the workplace - feel like nobody really cares in Parliament. Procedure always comes above actual people and well-being/concern.

‘Caseworkers I believe are the unsung heroes of parliamentary work and little recognition of their efforts takes place

‘Much more could be done to ensure MP staff have similar trade union recognition and are provided with similar rights to all other staff working in the House.

‘Still far too little in terms of shared resources or best practice. An unwillingness from Parliament to recognise that political parties exist and therefore it can be a challenge for staff to always be able to open-up and share issues when it is with colleagues working for MPs of other parties.

Training and support for caseworkers

‘There should be Caseworker-specific training available from Parliament when starting a new role, similar to the mandatory “Welcome to Parliament” talk

‘It ‘would be helpful to have a 'Caseworker conference once a year to share good practice. Training is offered but working part-time is sometimes difficult to take up the opportunity’

‘…during the Afghanistan evacuation a confidential emotional support line was made available to caseworkers. However, this was removed after a short period and as far as I'm aware there hasn't been anything to replace it

‘Have literature at the ready for what an MP can do, why we sometimes have to say we can't help, when we can end contact with an individual. This should not be up the MP. There should be a standard to safeguard all staff.

‘Although training is available it does not show how to run a caseload or the finer points of working with caseworker. This could be done by buddying a new starter with a more experienced caseworker to best practice.

‘…it would be cheap and quite easy to have a wellbeing room of some kind to go to after a difficult/suicidal call - there’s plenty of empty rooms after all. Having a physically distinct and quiet place to go would make a difference

Improvements to employment and job design

‘Coming from a place nearly 30 years ago, Parliament has come on in leaps and bounds supporting staff and offices

‘One Parliament, One Employer - Having a Member as an individual employer, rather than staffers centrally employed, means that we as employees are not equals with other offices. Terms, conditions and pay vary so massively between offices, and not having a centralised employer means that equality monitoring is not required. Support with HR from the House is limited, as they are not the employer, and even more so for employees rather than the Member and their Proxy. By having staff centrally employed, it would by default create a better support network and ensure working standards and practices across Parliament.

‘It seems crazy to me that 650 offices are doing the same thing. Take the bereavement leave policy. If every office were to take 1 hour to create one, that's 17 solid weeks of employee time spent developing just one policy....It would be much easier if everyone had the same terms and conditions.

‘Having some processes centrally managed on the staffing/HR side would also be much more helpful in setting reasonable expectations about employment conditions.

‘I got the job and was left to define what it is, what the standards are and the service expectations. I have had to build an office culture from scratch with insufficient resources... I would prefer to see greater support for the setting up of new offices and a much more defined structure for established offices

‘Better protections in place for MP's staff that sets out a code of conduct expected from general public, and a stricter definition on the roles of managers - and some sort of body that oversees staffing beyond MP's office if a staff member has an issue

‘Right now I have a significant problem with forward planning because it’s February, I’m ready to hire staff, and I won’t find out what next year’s budget is until March

‘It is up to individual managers how they allocate pay and there is nothing obligating them to be transparent over this process.

‘Better support for dyslexic employees would be very much appreciated

‘Our constituency office has experienced numerous disciplinary matters that should have seen the departure of problematic staff, but they were allowed to continue

‘Parliament could also do more to make it clear the parameters of an MPs role, as expectations are often that MPs are able to do anything. Finally, more should be done to ensure security for MPs staff in constituency offices. This could be done by parliament owning or renting one office in each constituency, which has the proper security arrangements in place, with this office passed to each MP for that area.

‘Better guidelines for all MPs on what kind of communication could reasonably be ignored - e.g. mass campaigns, which contribute a huge amount to our workload, particularly when they are sent in a format which is labour intensive

‘Casework has the potential to impact the lives of constituents in the most meaningful way and greater value and resourcing should be given to it. Also the role of Office Manager has also grown with security and sharing abusive emails etc. also growing, managing the team also takes longer and requires more inout when it is struggling with larger workloads leaving less time for own tasks also... while the OM calls are helpful, more support, resourcing, funding (both pay bands and overall budget) and training, especially HR, would be beneficial.

‘Have better screening of callers to root out any abusive calls.

‘The You and your MP leaflet can be helpful in trying to manage the general publics expectations but has not been updated in some time. Would be grateful for an updated version which is explicit about what can be expected from an MP and perhaps clarifying the difference between local and central government which many constituents seem to struggle with.

‘Discounted gym membership across the country not just for Parliament workers would be beneficial to help combat stress. Other organisations get corporate discounts