Chapter 6: Equality and Diversity

1. About this Chapter

1.1 This chapter sets out the general principles of the House of Commons Service equality, diversity and inclusion policies and procedures and how they are to be applied. These principles uphold the values of the House and serve to create a positive working environment for everyone.

1.2 This chapter contains information on the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, including the Diversity and Inclusion Team and specific guidance for staff and managers on:

- encouraging positive behaviour and dealing with negative behaviour, including the Behaviour Code
- working with disabilities
- caring responsibilities
- harassment, bullying and sexual misconduct
- Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme

1.3 The Diversity and Inclusion Team is responsible for developing and writing diversity policy, implementing the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, reporting diversity statistics, providing advice to staff of the House and the Parliamentary Digital Service, Members and their staff, and producing quarterly reports for the House of Commons Commission. The team provides advice to staff carrying out equality analysis of policies and procedures implemented by the House and co-ordinates a number of outreach schemes for adults, young people and students.

2. Principles

2.1 The House of Commons Service values all members of staff equally and, therefore, seeks to ensure that appropriate support mechanisms are available so that everyone can contribute their best in a positive working environment.

Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2.2 This document sets out the strategy for supporting the strategic goals of the House. It has been developed in line with the Equality Act 2010 and extends to all the protected characteristics in that Act:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

2.3 The D&I Strategy can be found on the Intranet: Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
2.4 The D&I Strategy supports the House of Commons Service in ensuring an inclusive working environment. The House seeks to ensure that this is a rewarding and fulfilling place to work by:

- promoting mutual trust, support and respect
- ensuring we work in an environment free from discrimination and inappropriate behaviour
- ensuring equality of opportunity
- recognising the contribution of all
- maximising personal development
- promoting work-life balance

2.5 The House of Commons Service is strongly committed to working with the best possible people from the widest talent pool available, so that it reflects the diversity of the United Kingdom.

2.6 By actively promoting equality and diversity, we seek to:

- recognise and value differences
- recognise that people work best in an environment where their contribution is valued
- retain and motivate staff to enable them to reach their full potential
- ensure fair and consistent treatment in all policies and practices
- address discrimination
- act in accordance with all legislation
- ensure development is available and accessible for all who want or need it
- improve customer service by valuing everyone’s contribution and giving them a voice

2.7 The House of Commons Service expects staff to behave in a way that promotes dignity and respect at work at all times and under all circumstances. We should always treat our colleagues, Members and their staff, visitors and the public politely and fairly, upholding the values of the House. The Behaviour Code (PDF 541 KB) articulates a shared set of behavioural expectations – the Parliamentary Community is protected by it, and bound by it. The Parliamentary Community comprises all those working for or with Parliament either on the Parliamentary Estate, in constituency offices or elsewhere in the course of their employment and/or parliamentary work.

2.8 These principles of equality and diversity apply to all areas of employment and include recruitment, selection, terms and conditions, the way we are managed, learning and development, promotion, transfers and appraisals.

**Workplace Equality Networks**

2.9 The House of Commons and House of Lords have established a number of Workplace Equality Networks (WENs) to provide an opportunity for groups of people to discuss and consider issues relevant to their situation or of interest to them.

2.10 The current WENs are:

- ParliABLE is a support network relevant to disabilities
- ParliGENDER is a support network relevant to gender and gender equality issues
- ParliOUT is a support network relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual, and questioning (LGBTIQ) people
- ParliREACH is a support network relevant to race, ethnicity and cultural heritage issues
- ParliON is a support network relevant to socio-economic inclusion and diversity
• **ParliCARE** is a support network relevant to caring responsibilities.

Further details of the WENs can be found on the Intranet at [Workplace Equality Networks](#).

### 3. Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme

3.1 On 16 July 2018, the House of Commons Commission agreed that the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme would apply to staff of the House Service and the Parliamentary Digital Service.

3.2 The Independent Scheme outlines a [Behaviour Code](#) for Parliament, and the policies, procedures and services designed to tackle bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct at Westminster. These include the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) Helpline which is there to support those affected by bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct.

3.3 Further information about the Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme, including the full policies and procedures for complaints about bullying and harassment or sexual misconduct, can be found [here](#). This scheme applies to all members of the parliamentary community, as outlined in the policies and procedures, including all House of Commons and Parliamentary Digital Service staff and all other parties working for the House of Commons Service including agency staff and contractors.

3.4 If you think that you have experienced bullying or harassment or sexual misconduct by a member of the parliamentary community you can report this experience and seek support and advice under the Scheme, including further information about the bullying and harassment or sexual misconduct policies and any other options. Please contact:

Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS) Helpline: supporting those affected by bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct

Call: 0808 168 9281 (freephone)

Email: Support@ICGShelpline.org.uk

The Helpline is open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday

This service can provide you with emotional support and guidance on the options available to you and the processes involved. It can also provide information about sources of advice and support which include Trade Union representatives, your line manager, a HR Adviser, the [Employee Assistance Programme](#), or a Guardian. A Guardian is a trained member of staff who acts as a confidential sounding board; an ambassador of our culture who can offer advice to those who come forward about the various escalation channels available – [Guardians SharePoint](#).

### 4. Working with disabilities

4.1 Staff who need a workplace adjustment to help them perform their role due to a disability or other particular requirement should discuss with their Line Manager. An adjustment to the job might include, for example, providing different IT equipment, changing working hours or adjusting tasks. Further advice and information is available on the intranet at:

[Workplace Adjustment (WPA) contacts, guidance and process](#)
4.2 The Workplace Adjustments Passport is available as a tool for employees and their Line Managers to use. It provides a record of adjustments that have been agreed and reviews of their effectiveness. The passport, along with further advice on managing disabilities may be obtained from the Workplace Adjustment Case Manager (email WPA@parliament.uk), HR Advice Services on ext. 2358 (email hradvisory@parliament.uk) or the Diversity and Inclusion team on ext. 2948 (email diversity@parliament.uk) and is on the Intranet at:

Managing disabilities

4.3 Other useful websites include:

- Business Disability Forum of which the House of Commons is as a member.
- British Dyslexia Association
- AbilityNet
- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
- Action on Hearing Loss (formerly Royal National Institute for Deaf People)
- Ergonomics Society
- Mind
- Access to Work
- Alzheimer’s Society

4.4 If you have informed your Line Manager that you have a disability that could hinder your escape in an emergency, you will be invited to help develop a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP). See chapter 5 for more information about personal emergency evacuation plans.

4.5 Staff who become seriously ill or disabled whilst working in the employment of the House will be supported by their Managers, together with HWS, so they can remain in work for as long as it is practicable to do so. More information on rehabilitation following long-term sickness absence can be found in chapter 15.

5. Caring Responsibilities

5.1 If you have caring responsibilities please see chapter 13 for advice on what leave you may be entitled to.

Childcare

5.2 The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) can offer advice and help with finding childcare, whether local to your home or in Westminster. This includes childcare for school age children.

Workplace nursery

5.3 The House has an on-site nursery, offering day care for up to 40 children aged between three months and five years

5.4 The Nursery is operated by London Early Years Foundation (LEYF) and is situated on the first floor of 1 Parliament Street in modern, secure facilities with a wide range of resources. It is registered with Ofsted and LEYF staff provide a varied play based curriculum to meet the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
5.5 Members, Members’ staff, House of Commons and Parliamentary Digital Service employees, House of Lords Peers and staff (including the grandchildren of these pass holders), Press Gallery Media Pass Holders, Civil Servants with CTC level clearance and Contractors situated on the Parliamentary Estate are eligible to request nursery places. Application forms and further information on the salary sacrifice scheme is on the Intranet at:

House of Commons Nursery

Childcare vouchers

5.6 The House of Commons recognises that employees need flexible pre-school and out-of-school childcare of a type and in a location most convenient to them. There are currently two House-supported schemes for childcare vouchers: salary sacrifice; and addition-to-salary, however both will close to new applications after 5 April 2018 following the introduction of tax-free childcare. To ensure your membership of either of these schemes by this cut-off date, applications must have been received by 9 March 2018.

Childcare Voucher Salary Sacrifice scheme

5.7 In the Childcare Voucher Salary Sacrifice scheme, you will agree with the House that your salary will be reduced in exchange for receiving childcare vouchers. The value of childcare vouchers you receive will be equal to the salary that has been given up. However, there are limits to how much you can claim in tax-free vouchers, depending on the rate of tax you pay.

5.8 You can choose your own childcare provider or nursery, but they must be state registered, or Ofsted approved.

5.9 Once you accept a salary sacrifice, your overall pay is lower, so you pay less tax and National Insurance.

5.10 For more information about the scheme and the issues to consider in deciding whether salary sacrifice is right for you please click here or contact Payroll Services on extension 2357.

Addition- to-salary childcare vouchers

5.11 In the Addition-to-Salary childcare vouchers scheme, vouchers are offered in addition to salary. This increases the total amount of money you are paid, but these payments are subject to tax and national insurance deductions. There are limits to how many childcare vouchers you can receive.

5.12 You can choose your own childcare provider or nursery, which may also include a close relative of the child other than your partner.

5.13 Former Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) on MPS TUPE terms are not eligible to join the Addition-to-Salary childcare voucher scheme. Furthermore, from 1 November 2017 the scheme has been closed to all new employees.

5.14 For more information about the scheme please click here or contact Payroll Services on extension 2357.

Help with extra childcare costs

5.15 If you go on a training course financed by the House, work overtime or extra hours sanctioned by management, or the House is recalled during your holiday or recess period, you may be able to
claim for any extra childcare costs which are incurred as a result. These need to be agreed with your Line Manager in advance. You can make an expense claim via HAIS employee self-service.

6. More Information

6.1 For more information about the Equality Act, see the government website:

Introduction to the Equality Act

Return to the Staff Handbook

Glossary of abbreviations

PDF of the glossary of abbreviations