

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:

- valuing others: encouraging positive behaviour and dealing with negative behaviour
- working with disabilities
- caring responsibilities
- harassment and bullying
- complaints processes

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 Internet at: [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.

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

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

3. Valuing Others Policy

3.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the rights and responsibilities of managers and staff in ensuring that everyone is able to work in a positive environment free from unacceptable behaviours such as discrimination, harassment, bullying and victimisation. The policy, therefore, describes and encourages the behaviours that support the principle of valuing others. These are to:

- ensure the dignity at work of all our employees
- respect others and value their contribution to the organisation
- demonstrate our commitment to equality and inclusion through our actions
- be open and constructive in our communications
- be fair and just in our dealings with each other
- handle conflict promptly, effectively and creatively
- raise awareness of the effects of unacceptable behaviour

Rights and responsibilities of staff

Rights

3.2 All staff can expect to:

- be treated with dignity, respect and courtesy by managers, colleagues, Members of Parliament and their staff, contractors, visitors and members of the public
- be valued for the work that they do
- be free from any form of discrimination, victimisation, harassment or bullying when on the Parliamentary Estate or on Parliamentary business
- work in an environment free from unwelcome behaviour and language

Responsibilities

3.3 All staff should:

- conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner
- be fair and just in all workplace dealings
- appreciate that what is acceptable behaviour to them may not be acceptable to the recipient
- help and protect the rights of others
- listen to the views of others
- understand the difference between normal work disagreements and harassment/ bullying (see definitions in paragraphs 4.1 and 4.3 below)
- understand the difference between managing performance and harassment/ bullying

3.4 All staff are responsible for ensuring they understand what behaviour is required of them and that their conduct does not cause offence. Everyone shares a responsibility for understanding the sensitivities and feelings of others and avoiding behaviour that could cause offence or distress.

Equally, all staff should be free to carry out their duties free from unfounded allegations of harassment or bullying.

Rights and responsibilities of managers

Rights

3.5 All managers are entitled to the same rights as non-managerial staff (see paragraph 3.4 above). Managers also have the right to be able to manage their staff free from unfounded allegations or harassment or bullying.

Responsibilities

3.6 Managers are responsible for setting a good example by treating all staff with dignity. They should:

- encourage and foster an atmosphere of respect and understanding
- lead by example through a fair, consistent and open management style
- carry out management duties in a fair, reasonable and consistent manner
- give legitimate, constructive and fair feedback about conduct and performance
- ensure staff are aware of the behaviour expected of them and that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated
- act swiftly and appropriately if unacceptable behaviour occurs. Ignoring the issue is not an acceptable option.

3.7 As part of their role managers should also:

- be able to issue reasonable instructions and expect them to be carried out
- set expected standards of performance through effective use of the performance management systems
- use attendance, performance, and disciplinary management procedures as set out in this Handbook

3.8 Unacceptable behaviour excludes legitimate actions by a manager, such as:

- encouraging an employee to perform against key objectives and to conduct themselves appropriately
- taking action within the disciplinary or other formal procedures

3.9 It does not exclude people in authority using their position to bully, abuse or harass others, or acting in a threatening or intimidating way.

4. Harassment and Bullying

Definitions

4.1 Harassment is any unwanted behaviour of a physical, verbal or non-verbal nature that violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive

environment. It may be directed against someone because of their sex, gender identity, race, age, religion or belief, disability or because of their sexual orientation.

4.2 The key factors of harassment are that it is unwanted, unjustified and/or unreciprocated. It fails to respect the rights of others or the impact that such behaviours may have. Such behaviours may be persistent or one isolated, serious incident.

4.3 Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour; an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient.

4.4 Such unacceptable behaviour can take many forms and can range from physical abuse to more covert conduct, including using social networking to bully or harass (i.e. cyber bullying) It includes behaviour that deliberately or inadvertently excludes individuals from normal activities in the workplace.

4.5 Examples of harassing/bullying behaviour include:

- spreading malicious rumours or insulting someone by word or behaviour
- ridiculing or demeaning someone
- victimisation
- exclusion (for example, intentionally excluding someone from the group)
- threatening remarks or actions
- overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position
- unwelcome sexual advances (touching, standing too close, the display of offensive materials, suggestive remarks)
- deliberate undermining of an employee by overloading and constant criticism
- preventing individuals progressing by intentionally blocking promotion or development opportunities
- negative stereotyping based on a protected characteristic
- 'outing' someone on the ground of their sexual orientation or change of gender
- intrusive questioning about a person's marital status
- inappropriate photographs, offensive, insulting or threatening comments or sensitive personal information posted on a social networking site

4.6 This list should not be regarded as exhaustive, but merely to illustrate some behaviours that may be construed as harassing or bullying.

Unfounded, malicious or vexatious complaints

4.7 While employees will be fully supported when they are involved in raising concerns of harassment or bullying, complaints that are found to have been made without sufficient foundation, maliciously or vexatiously may be dealt with under disciplinary proceedings as in [chapter 20](#).

4.8 Examples of unfounded, vexatious or malicious complaints could be:

- a succession of complaints without reasonable grounds from one source against the same individual or groups of individuals

- a series of complaints between two or more people, one apparently made in response to another ('tit-for-tat' complaints)
- continuing to raise an issue that has previously been dealt with and resolved
- raising a complaint about bullying or harassment during other management processes (e.g. attendance management, poor performance management) where these allegations are found to be without foundation or substance

Dealing with negative behaviours

4.9 There may be occasions when you believe you are not being treated appropriately at work. In these situations, you need a resolution as quickly as possible to ensure the issue is dealt with and you can continue to work in a positive environment.

4.10 You should consider why you believe you have been treated unfairly: what was said or done, by whom and under what circumstances? What did you do or say beforehand? Is it a case of a normal and acceptable workplace disagreement or harassment/bullying? Is there truth in what was said even though you feel uncomfortable with it? For example, criticism is acceptable when it is constructive, delivered in private, and accompanied by reasonable suggestions for improvement.

4.11 Please read the definitions of harassment and bullying carefully. Your complaint may be resolved more appropriately using another procedure such as the grievance procedure (see [chapter 21](#)).

Support and advice

4.12 If you believe you have been subjected to harassment or bullying you should be pro-active, seek support and take action.

4.13 If you are accused of harassment or bullying, you have the right to be fully informed of the allegation and seek support.

4.14 The following internal people are available to help you in confidence:

- **Line Manager:** If you are the complainant, or being accused of, harassment or bullying, your Line Manager can be approached in confidence for advice. They may approach the other party on your behalf, or just act as a sounding board for you. Your Line Manager is often the best person to take these problems to initially. If your complaint is about your Line Manager you should speak to the next person in your line management chain.
- **Harassment and Bullying Contact (HBC):** HBCs are volunteer members of staff who have been specifically trained in working with cases of harassment and bullying. The role of the HBC is to provide a confidential support service to staff who feel they are being harassed or bullied at work, and staff who have been accused of such behaviours. The HBC can:
 - be someone who listens, values and supports
 - provide information on policies and other sources of help and advice
 - describe possibilities for action
 - explore the issues with you

- discuss ways of resolving the problem
- help you understand how any accusation might have arisen
- suggest ways of dealing with possible victimisation from colleagues

4.15 HBCs will not be advocates or take issues forward on behalf of staff or represent staff. HBCs will maintain confidentiality except in extreme cases where physical or mental harm or sexual harassment is reported or a criminal offence is suspected.

4.16 For contact details of HBCs, call the HR Advisory Service on ext.2358 or hradvisory@parliament.uk. A different HBC will be assigned to each party.

- **Trade Union Representative:** For Trade Union members, a Trade Union Representative can offer confidential advice on whether or not you have a case that could be defined as harassment or bullying, what they can do to support you and how to proceed. Trade Union Representatives will provide help and support to both parties, even if both the complainant and the person being complained about are members of the same Trade Union. If you are unsure which Trade Union Representative can support you, contact the Trade Union Side Administrator on ext. 5611.
- **Welfare Officer:** The Welfare Officer (WO) can offer confidential support and counselling for both parties. You can make an appointment to see a Welfare Officer during working hours or at another mutually convenient time. The Welfare Office may be reached on ext. 1484.
- **HR Advisers:** An HR Adviser can provide advice on what kind of complaint you may have and what the best option for addressing it might be in your case. If you have been accused of harassment or bullying, your HR Adviser will advise you of the process, your rights and other support available to you. They will be able to advise both parties on any possible legal implications.
- **External advice:** External advice can be sought through:
 - [ACAS](#)
 - [Citizens' Advice](#)
 - [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#)

5. Complaints Processes

Informal internal procedures

5.1 It is important that you consider trying to resolve the issue informally in the first instance. The internal people listed in paragraph 4.14 above can help you with this and you may contact them for advice and support.

5.2 It can be useful to keep records such as a diary of all incidents of inappropriate behaviour or language. Record times, dates, witnesses and your feelings as a result of the way you have been treated. Keep copies of anything that you feel might be relevant, such as letters, emails, appraisals and notes of any meetings that relate to your complaint. Talk with colleagues to establish whether anyone else is suffering or has witnessed what is happening to you.

5.3 Where possible, avoid being alone with the person you believe is harassing or bullying you.

Actions if your complaint is against a member of staff

5.4 If you feel able to, you should approach the individual concerned and make it clear that their behaviour is unwelcome and you want it to stop. You may want to tell them that you regard their behaviour as harassment or bullying as defined in the Staff Handbook. You can ask a colleague, Harassment and Bullying Contact or Trade Union Representative to help you to prepare to meet the individual.

5.5 If you feel unable to speak directly to the person concerned, you may wish to write to them. Once they know the behaviour is unwelcome (they may be unaware of this), your letter may be enough to stop it. Keep a copy of your letter and any reply.

5.6 If you feel unable or unwilling to make personal contact with the individual, you may want this to be done on your behalf by your Line Manager. They will ask you what you want to happen, and then contact the other party to hear their viewpoint. Once they have heard both sides of the story, they may advise how best to take the matter forward.

5.7 It is up to you whether you wish to report the matter at this stage. If you feel the person concerned did not mean offence or has taken the point, you may decide not to pursue it further.

5.8 If the individual is someone other than a member of House of Commons staff, talk to your Line Manager before taking any further action. If your complaint is about the behaviour of a Member of Parliament please see section 7 below.

Mediation

5.9 It may be suggested that mediation would be helpful in resolving your complaint. Mediation is a confidential process where a neutral person – the mediator – works with both parties to help them find a solution and reach an agreement that will improve the situation. The mediator will not take sides, apportion blame or judge what is right or wrong. Mediation can be used at any stage in a dispute but is often most effective if used early on and can only be used if both parties are willing to take part in the process and both recognise that they need to make changes to their own behaviour.

5.10 The mediator will usually:

- meet both parties individually, explain the role of the mediator and the process of mediation, and identify the key issues
- arrange to meet both parties together in an agreed, neutral venue that ensures confidentiality, explain and agree the ground rules and remind the parties of the process before seeking to secure their agreement to continue
- explore the issues with the parties, ensure that the ground rules are observed and summarise areas of dispute and agreement
- try to keep the parties focused on the future, not the past
- build agreements, ensuring the workability of solutions with the parties
- assist the parties in drawing up an agreement that is clearly worded and that may be signed by each party

5.11 Involvement of a qualified, internal mediator can be arranged through your Line Manager or the HR Advisory Service.

Formal external investigation procedures

5.12 The above procedures should normally be explored and exhausted before formal external procedures are initiated. The formal procedures may be invoked:

- when internal attempts to resolve the problem have been unsuccessful
- when the harassment or bullying persists or begins again
- for a single, serious incident of harassment or bullying which could be described as gross misconduct and which could result, for example, in suspension while the matter is being investigated
- at the discretion of the Head of the HR Advisory Service

5.13 All formal investigations will be conducted by a person deemed competent by the House, who would be expected to allocate sufficient resources to complete the investigation within agreed time limits. The External Harassment Investigator (EHI) will be appointed by the Head of the HR Advisory Service. The EHI will be a neutral party with appropriate training or experience and is usually appointed from a procured list of external investigators.

5.14 The External Harassment Investigator (EHI) will:

- investigate allegations fairly, thoroughly and within agreed time limits
- preserve confidentiality as far as possible
- advise the House if they suspect a complaint is unfounded or has been made, vexatiously or maliciously

Step 1: Making a complaint and preliminary assessment

5.15 You should submit a written complaint to your Line Manager or the next person in your management chain, as appropriate. This should contain the name of the alleged perpetrator, date and description of the incident(s), names of any witnesses, details of internal resolutions already undertaken and your desired outcome. You may ask a Harassment and Bullying Contact, Trade Union Representative or your HR Adviser to assist you with this letter.

5.16 Under this procedure the Line Manager of the person being complained about will normally deal with the complaints and act as the Deciding Officer unless:

- the complaint is also against them
- they are also your Line Manager
- there is another appropriate reason(s) why they should not deal with the complaint

5.17 In these cases another senior Manager with no previous involvement in this investigation or previous procedures relating to the case may carry out the role of Deciding Officer.

5.18 The Deciding Officer, on behalf of the House, will:

- assume you have made the complaint in good faith and take your complaint seriously
- protect you and the person you have complained about from victimisation
- make sure appropriate support and information is provided to all those involved
- be fair to you and to the person complained about
- keep both you and the person complained about informed of progress

5.19 The Deciding Officer will send a copy of the letter of complaint to the person who has been complained about with advice on where they can obtain support. The Deciding Officer will alert the Head of HR Advisory Service who will commission one of the approved External Harassment Investigators (EHI) to carry out a preliminary assessment, deciding if there is a case of harassment or bullying to be investigated.

5.20 The EHI will:

- Interview you and the person complained about. You both have the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative or colleague at the interviews
- Complete an assessment report. (This gives the EHI a standard format by which to present their findings.)
- Advise the Deciding Officer and the Head of HR Advisory of their findings and recommendations.

5.21 If the EHI advises that there is a potential case of harassment or bullying, they will inform the Deciding Officer and the Head of HR Advisory Service, who will formally appoint the same EHI to carry out the formal investigation.

Step 2: Formal external investigation

Initiating the investigation

5.22 The EHI will meet the Deciding Officer and/or the head of the HR Advisory Service. They will make arrangements for evidence gathering and agree a timetable for the investigation.

Evidence gathering

5.23 Evidence gathering will include face-to-face separate interviews with yourself and the person you have complained about, unless this is impossible for acceptable reasons. Other witnesses such as colleagues may be asked to supply evidence either face to face or in written format. On occasion witnesses' statements may be given via some other method so that the process is not prolonged.

5.24 At all interviews, the EHI or another person, will take notes and the interviewee will be asked to agree these by signing them or confirming agreement by email. They will receive a copy of these notes. The complainant and the person being complained about are entitled to be made aware of the key relevant elements of witness statements (but not the names of witnesses) when they have been agreed and signed by the witness as being accurate. Both parties will be given seven calendar days to comment on substantial points of fact.

Report

5.25 The EHI will produce a report, in which all comments must be relevant to the case in hand and be substantiated. Both the complainant and the person being complained about may request a progress summary of the investigation from the Deciding Officer.

5.26 The investigation report will be sent initially to the Deciding Officer. The Deciding Officer will check the report for procedural correctness and to familiarise themselves with the contents. They will then let you and the person being complained about know that the report has been received.

5.27 A copy will also be sent to the Head of the HR Advisory Service to ensure that the issue has been dealt with promptly and that a fair and consistent approach is taken by Managers across the House Service.

Step 3: Decision

5.28 Once the Deciding Officer has received the report, they may accept the recommendations or ask further questions of the EHI or any party involved for clarification where they feel necessary.

5.29 When the Deciding Officer has reached a decision they will meet you and the person being complained about separately as soon as possible (normally within two calendar weeks) to let you know the outcome of the investigation and the recommendations. Both you and the person being complained about may be accompanied by a Trade Union Representative or a colleague to the meeting.

5.30 You and the person being complained about will be expected to keep the matter confidential and not discuss the case further, except with the Trade Union Representative or colleague who is accompanying you to the meeting, until you have both met the Deciding Officer separately. Confidentiality must be observed throughout this process.

5.31 At your meeting, the Deciding Officer will explain their decision and give you a copy of the report. Support will be provided to you and the person complained about to ensure, if possible, that relations are repaired sufficiently for everyday work to resume. Time may be given during the meeting to allow you to discuss the outcome with your Trade Union Representative or colleague.

5.32 At the meeting with the person being complained about, the Deciding Officer will also give them a copy of the report, let them know the decision and give time for them to discuss the outcome with their Trade Union Representative or colleague.

Resolutions and outcomes for internal and external procedures

5.33 No matter what the outcome, support will be provided to either or both parties to ensure, if possible, that relations are repaired sufficiently for everyday work to resume.

5.34 Possible solutions may include:

- asking the perpetrator to apologise
- providing coaching for either or both parties
- providing training for either or both parties
- providing counselling for either or both parties

- mediation
- moving one party to a different work area
- undertaking disciplinary procedures, which may result in informal action, a formal warning and/or dismissal (see [chapter 20](#))

5.35 Where the behaviour is judged to be unfounded, malicious or vexatious, or where one party cannot agree on the resolution, the Deciding Officer may recommend that one party should be moved to a different work area or that the disciplinary procedures be implemented if appropriate to the case. Your HR Adviser must be involved in any action taken following either of the above recommendations.

Step 4: Appeal

5.36 Both parties have the right to appeal the decision. An appeal must be made in writing within ten calendar days of receiving the decision. There are two grounds for appeal:

- that substantial new evidence has come to light
- that the investigation did not follow the House of Commons agreed procedures

5.37 Appeals should be made in writing to the Deciding Officer, copied to the Head of the HR Advisory Service, stating the grounds for appeal in as much detail as possible.

5.38 A Manager who has not been involved with the investigation and appointed by the Head of the HR Advisory Service will consider whether there are grounds for appeal and notify all the relevant parties within ten calendar days of the appeal being received.

In the event of the appeal being granted

5.39 In the event of the appeal being granted:

- If substantial new evidence has come to light the investigation will be reopened with the same EHI. They will submit another report, considering the additional evidence, to a different Deciding Officer who has not been previously involved in the case. You will be notified of the result within three calendar weeks, unless unforeseen circumstances prevent it. In this instance, a new timetable will be agreed.
- The decision on whether there has been a breach in procedure will be taken by the Head of the HR Advisory Service. If upheld, a new external investigator will be engaged to start a new investigation as part of the appeals procedure. If it is not upheld, the decision made by the original Deciding Officer stands. The Head of the HR Advisory Service will write to both parties informing them of the result of the appeal, within ten calendar days of the appeal being submitted.

5.40 If new evidence is brought up outside the appeal deadline of ten calendar days this will be treated as a new complaint.

6. Records

6.1 Relevant and appropriate records of all stages of both internal and external procedures will be maintained confidentially in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

6.2 Official letters are kept on personal files. All other information is kept by HR for a period of six years.

6.3 The Head of the HR Advisory Service will keep records including:

- preliminary assessment
- external harassment investigator report
- external harassment investigators' and internal mediators' evaluations from the parties

7. If your complaint is against a Member of Parliament

7.1 Members, their staff, and House staff work together to make the House of Commons function effectively. This work is typically undertaken in a constructive manner and there is clear commitment on the part of the House of Commons Commission and Management Board to ensuring that everyone is, at all times, treated with dignity, courtesy and respect.

7.2 However, as in any workplace, conflict, disagreements or disputes may occasionally arise. The Respect Policy explains what is expected of relationships between House staff and Members and their staff. It covers:

- the aims of the policy;
- the principles which should be followed;
- definitions of what may constitute bullying and harassment should this arise;
- the procedures to be followed should you feel you have been bullied or harassed by a Member or their staff;
- further information on where to go for help and advice

7.3 The Respect Policy may be found at the following Intranet link:

[Respect Policy](#)

7.4 The policy does not apply in respect of alleged harassment or bullying by House staff in relation to other House staff - that is dealt with under the Valuing Others policy (see Section 3). Any complaints from Members about the conduct of House staff should be addressed in the first instance to a manager of the member of staff concerned.

8. Working with disabilities

8.1 Staff who need an 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. The Health and Wellbeing team on ext. 1484, the HR Advisory Service on ext. 2358 and the Diversity and Inclusion team on ext. 2948 can provide further advice and information.

8.2 A Tailored Adjustment form 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 form, along with further advice on managing disabilities may be obtained from the HR Advisory Service on ext. 2358 or the Diversity and Inclusion team on ext. 2948 and is on the Intranet at:

[Managing disabilities](#)

8.3 Other useful websites include:

- [Business Disability Forum](#) of which the House of Commons is as a member.
- [Government Equalities office: Equality Act 2010: What do I need to know? Disability quick start guide](#)
- [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](#)

8.4 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.

8.5 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](#).

9. Caring Responsibilities

9.1 If you have caring responsibilities please see [chapter 13](#) for advice on what leave you may be entitled to.

Childcare

9.2 The Welfare Officer 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

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

9.4 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.

9.5 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

9.6 If you have children under five, or children aged five to 12 who require care during the school holidays, you may be entitled to claim childcare vouchers to help with the cost of childcare whether you work on the Parliamentary Estate or at home or any combination of this. Vouchers may also be claimed to cover periods of annual leave (a maximum of 40 days or 45 days for some Library staff). Vouchers are currently worth £8.00 per day. If you have any questions or require further information contact the Payroll Services Team , by email: sectionphocstaff@parliament.uk or on ext. 4475.

9.7 More information on joining the childcare voucher scheme is on the Intranet at:

[Childcare voucher scheme](#)

Help with extra childcare costs

9.8 If you go on a training course financed by the House, or you work overtime or extra hours sanctioned by management, 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, who can ask the HR Advisory Service for advice about whether to approve your request. You can make an expense claim via HAIS employee self-service.

10. More Information

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

[Introduction to the Equality Act](#)

[Return to the Staff Handbook](#)