



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# **ADMINISTRATION GUIDE - FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR MEMBERS**

APRIL 1, 2026

PUBLISHED BY THE FINANCE OFFICE

ROOM 401, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS, STORMONT ESTATE, BALLYMISCAW, BELFAST, BT4 3XX



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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Administration Guide

1.1.1. This guide is issued on behalf of the Assembly Commission to offer guidance to Members, detailing what financial support is available, setting out the criteria which must be met, and the administrative processes which must be followed in order to avail of the financial support.

1.1.2. Financial support for Members is provided under the terms of the Assembly Members (Office and Staffing Costs and Allowances) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2025 ('the 2025 Determination'). The overarching purpose of providing financial support to Members is to ensure that Members do not suffer a financial detriment by reason of costs incurred in connection with the exercise of functions as a Member. Functions are defined in paragraph 46 (3) of the 2025 Determination and are reproduced at Annex 1.1 for ease of reference.

1.1.3. The 2025 Determination not only sets the quantum of financial support that is available to Members, but it also sets out the criteria which must be met in order to recover the financial support. The precise terms of the 2025 Determination are legally binding and must be applied in full.

1.1.4. The purpose of this document is not to replicate the details of the 2025 Determination, rather, it should be used alongside the 2025 Determination. A copy of the 2025 Determination can be accessed in the Finance Office section of the Members' portal or the Assembly Commission's website, using the following link:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/your-mlas/members-salaries-and-expenses/>

1.1.5. From time to time, the Assembly Commission may issue updates to this guide or provide Members with additional guidance on specific issues. These updates are issued as 'Briefing Notes' and are available in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal.

1.1.6. The Members' Portal is the central resource provided for Members, containing all of the information a Member may need to assist them with their work as a Member. It is a SharePoint site, which can be accessed by logging into the Microsoft 365 account that is set up when a Member takes up their role:

<https://niassembly.sharepoint.com/sites/MembersIntranet>

1.1.7. A full list of the Briefing Notes that have been issued so far, with a summary of their content is attached at Annex 1.2 for ease of reference.

## Background

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1.1.8. The Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016 (the '2016 Determination') was first published on 23 March 2016 by the Independent Financial Review Panel ('the Panel'). The Assembly Members (Pensions) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016 ('2016 Pensions Determination') was also published in April 2016. The Panel was established in July 2011 under the provisions of the Assembly Members (Independent Financial Review and Standards) Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, to determine salaries, allowances and pensions payable to Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. A number of

Determinations were published by the Panel during its tenure, the final ones were the 2016 Determinations.

- 1.1.9. The tenure of the first Panel ended in July 2016. As a consequence of the Assembly Commission's desire to consider a reform of the Panel and the political situation which arose between March 2017 and January 2020, a new Panel was not appointed. In the continuing absence of a Panel a motion was brought to the Assembly on 30 June 2020 to confer powers on the Assembly Commission, to allow it to determine allowances payable to Members.
- 1.1.10. Using these powers, the Assembly Commission published an amending Determination in August 2020, called the Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) (Amendment) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2020, which amended the Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016, but did not revoke it.
- 1.1.11. A similar motion was brought to the Assembly on 4 February 2025 to confer powers on the Assembly Commission, allowing it to also determine allowances payable to former Members. On 7 February 2025 the Assembly Commission published the Assembly Members' (Office and Staffing Costs and Allowances) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2025 (the '2025 Determination').
- 1.1.12. The 2025 Determination made a number of significant changes, by omitting Parts 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the 2016 Determination, along with the Schedule, revoking the 2020 Determination and introducing a number of new provisions. The structure of the 2025 Determination helped pave the way for two separate Determinations going forward, i.e. a Salary and Pension Determination, which was a matter for the Independent Remuneration Board ("the Board") once it was formed after the passing of the Assembly Members (Independent Remuneration Board) Act (Northern Ireland) 2025 on 16 September 2025, and an Office and Staffing Cost and Allowances Determination, which is a matter for the Assembly Commission.
- 1.1.13. Members' salaries are provided for by paragraph 2 of the Assembly Members (Salaries) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2026 ("the 2026 Determination"), which was passed on 12 March 2026. Members' pensions continue to be provided for by the 2016 Pensions Determination, however the Board will be undertaking a new determination to replace the 2016 Pensions Determination in due course.

## 1.2 Principles of financial support

1.2.1. The framework of financial support for Members is underpinned by two sets of principles. While not formally part of the 2025 Determination, Members must adhere to these principles when seeking to avail of financial support. These principles are (i) the Seven Nolan Principles of Public Life and (ii) the Ten Principles that were agreed between the political parties and the Assembly Commission in 2009.

1.2.2. In claiming financial support, a Member is expected to:

- a) Comply fully with the requirements of paragraph 2 of the 2026 (i.e. in relation to Members' salaries) and the 2025 Determinations;
- b) Adhere to the two sets of principles. Both sets of principles have been attached at Annexes 1.3 and 1.4, for ease of reference; and
- c) Have regard to any guidance issued by the Assembly Commission, including this working Administration Guide and any specific or updated guidance issued through Briefing Notes.

1.2.3. Failure to comply with the any of the above may result in the non-payment of claims and, where appropriate, the recoupment of previous payments.

### Application of Principles

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1.2.4. Prior to submission, all claims, including those for support staff costs, should be assessed against the principles. If there are any areas of uncertainty, Members should contact the Members' Financial Support (MFS) team to discuss the appropriateness of a claim in advance of submitting it.

1.2.5. A series of forms have been created to capture the specific information that must be supplied, and the certifications that Members must make for each claim. These are designed to ensure that Members fully comply with the requirements of all of the Determinations.

1.2.6. A list of current forms is included in Annex 1.5 for ease of reference and copies of the forms are available in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal. Members must take care to use the most recent version of all forms. Therefore, it is recommended to use the forms from the Portal, as these are regularly updated.

1.2.7. Every year Members must make and submit a declaration that confirms they have complied with all of the requirements of the 2025 Determination. It confirms that compliance has been achieved for the previous year and that specific conditions continue to be met. See the Section entitled [Annual Declaration of Compliance \(MF12\)](#) for more details (on page 70).

1.2.8. While Members are not bound by specific public procurement requirements the Ten Principles require Members to ensure that any expenditure incurred provides value for money (Principle 8). Members are responsible for liaising and identifying appropriate contractors to provide the goods or services. In this process, Members must ensure they demonstrate value for money when using public funds. Therefore, any costs incurred and subsequently reclaimed must represent the most prudent choice and be cost effective. Documentation of value for money considerations should be kept for audit purpose.

*Section 1 - Associated Annexes:*

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|------------------|---|
| <i>Annex 1.1</i> | <i>Definition of functions of a Member;</i> |
| <i>Annex 1.2</i> | <i>List of Briefing Notes issued;</i>       |
| <i>Annex 1.3</i> | <i>Seven Principles of Public Life;</i>     |
| <i>Annex 1.4</i> | <i>Ten Principles;</i>                      |
| <i>Annex 1.5</i> | <i>List of current forms.</i>               |

## 2 Roles and Responsibilities

### 2.1 Role of the Finance Office

- 2.1.1. On behalf of the Assembly Commission the Finance Office is responsible for the administration of the Determinations. The team which has specific responsibility for assisting Members and processing payments is the MFS team. The team also has responsibility for the administration of the centrally provided pension scheme for Members' support staff.
- 2.1.2. The team is located on the fourth floor of Parliament Buildings. Full contact details of the MFS team are published in the Finance Office's section of the Members' Portal:  
<https://niassembly.sharepoint.com/sites/MembersIntranet-Finance>
- 2.1.3. The MFS team consists of two sections: -
- a) Pay and Pensions team; and
  - b) Claims team.
- 2.1.4. The MFS team deals with the day-to-day operational administration of the 2025 Determination and paragraph 2 of the 2026 Determination, by paying salaries, allowances and claims for costs incurred by Members, as well as acting as a payroll bureau for Members to pay their support staff.
- 2.1.5. The MFS team offers advice and support to Members on all aspects of financial support, including issues relating to the admissibility of claims and compliance with the specific requirements of the Determinations. The team also advises on budgeting to ensure the maximum allowances and levels of funding are not exceeded.
- 2.1.6. Every claim submitted for the recovery of costs is verified by the team to ensure compliance with the requirements of the 2025 Determination.
- 2.1.7. The team also oversees the administration of the Assembly Members' (Pensions) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016 and the associated Assembly Members' Pension Scheme (AMP Scheme). Part of this administration is outsourced by the Pension Trustees to a third party pension administration company, ISIO Ltd (formerly Deloitte). The MFS team manages the ISIO contract, on behalf of the Trustees, helping and supporting the Trustees with the day-to-day operation of the AMP Scheme.
- 2.1.8. In applying the rules and guidance for claiming financial support, the MFS team may make such arrangements as is deemed appropriate for the administration of the Determinations. Under this authority the team may: -
- a) On the submission of a claim by a Member, reimburse costs incurred by that Member, or make a payment for support staff costs;
  - b) Issue clarification or guidance to Members on the operation of the rules for claiming financial support;
  - c) Set the form and manner in which claims and declarations must be submitted;

- d) Set the time limits for the submission of the claims and ensure that the consequences of non-compliance, as detailed in paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination, are applied in full; and
- e) In considering any matter under the Determinations, the MFS team shall consider whether Members have adhered to the guidance issued.

## 2.2 Managing Expenditure

- 2.2.1. Unless specified elsewhere, all budgets and financial limits set out in this guidance are for a year commencing on 1 April and ending on 31 March of the following year. All references to a "year" are to be read in this context.
- 2.2.2. Members are responsible for planning, forecasting and managing their own budgets. Members can only recover costs up to the limits of the provisions set out in the 2025 Determination. In exceptional circumstances, Members may incur business costs above the stated limits of the 2025 Determination. However, these may not be recovered and Members would be responsible for paying these individually.
- 2.2.3. To assist Members, a monthly expenditure and budget report is provided by the Claims team. This report is for each category of expenditure, and includes all costs claimed or paid to the end of each month, compared to the maximum amount recoverable or due. The report will include estimates of commitments that have already been made against funding limits, such as the monthly/quarterly rent or contractual salary payments.

## 2.3 Delegation of Financial Authority

- 2.3.1. All claims for the recovery of costs and instructions for payroll must be signed by the Member (see [Submission Process](#))
- 2.3.2. However, it is recognised that a Member may wish to delegate the submission and management of claims and/or certain payroll functions to a representative to act on their behalf. This can be applied for by completing a **Delegation of Financial Authority Form (MF16)**. Members should contact the Finance Office if they need to avail of this facility.
- 2.3.3. Where financial authority is delegated it provides that the representative may approve the recovery of costs under the Determination. However, Members should remain aware that they retain ultimate responsibility for their claims and the management of budgets. Furthermore, in their role as employers, Members must continue to bear overall responsibility for any employment related decisions or actions taken by the representative.
- 2.3.4. Delegated representatives are not permitted to sign any annual declarations on behalf of the Member, or to approve any claims or payroll that pertain to themselves. Any such document must continue to be signed by the Member, unless there are exceptional circumstances where the Member is absent on leave or incapacitated.

## Choosing approval roles

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2.3.5. In order to facilitate ease of processing, more than one representative can be appointed. This could either be to provide contingency arrangements in the absence of the main representative or because the Member wishes to assign different roles to a number of representatives, i.e. to set up different approval roles.

2.3.6. Approval roles may carry different permissions (listed below) and consideration should be given to ensure the correct permission rights are given to each representative. When completing the **Delegation of Financial Authority Form (MF16)** form, the Member should indicate the approval roles assigned to each representative. Multiple roles can be assigned to the same representative, it is not necessary to assign them to different representatives.

2.3.7. The approval roles are:

a) Claims Approval:

This approval role covers COOC, COSUM, Security Measures and Category 2 Staff costs:

- Create and approve claim forms
- Create and submit pre-approval forms
- Create and submit appeal forms
- Discuss claim and appeal matters with Finance Office
- View monthly expenditure report, which includes high level payroll costs

b) Payroll Approval:

- View and discuss annual payroll expense/budget
- Discuss payroll matters with Finance Office
- Create and submit payroll forms on behalf of the Member as follows:
  - o Contractual forms, including New Starter, Leaver and Contract Amendments
  - o Additional Hours
  - o Absence management – including family and sick
  - o Performance review
  - o Support staff travel claims

c) Disability Costs Application Approval

Members may submit an application to request disability support. As support can either be in the form of additional support staff or the recovery of costs incurred, the Member must be content

- Create and approve disability costs application form
- Discuss disability matters with Finance Office

## Delegated Representatives – submitting forms

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- 2.3.8. To complete a Delegation of Financial Authority form a Member should:
- a) Choose a representative. This can be another Member or a member of your support staff.
  - b) Pick which functions the representative can authorise. You can tick all boxes or customise it for your needs.
  - c) State the start date and end date of the delegated period.
  - d) Sign and date form.
  - e) Your representative must sign the form as well, providing three sample signatures in the box provided.

## **3 Members' Salaries, Pension and Allowances**

### **3.1 Overview**

3.1.1. This chapter provides an overview of the function of the Pay and Pensions team in processing Members' salaries and those allowances paid directly to Members.

3.1.2. As noted in the overall introduction to this guide, Members' salaries are provided under paragraph 2 of the 2026 Determination. Members are paid a salary from the date they take up office, by giving the Undertaking and signing the Roll of Membership, up to and including the day they leave office. There are a number of other conditions set out in the 2026 Determination that must be met in order to receive payment. It is imperative that Members read Part 2 of the 2026 Determination and ensure they are familiar with it.

3.1.3. The Pay and Pensions team is responsible for paying Members their salaries and those allowances paid directly to Members, such as Travel, Resettlement or Ill-Health Retirement Allowances. The team also undertakes the administration of all statutory payments, including payment to His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) of the relevant deductions in respect of tax (PAYE), national insurance contributions (NIC), and student loans. It also makes all third party payments, such as court orders, childcare vouchers, or charitable payroll giving, while also undertaking all statutory reporting.

## 3.2 Members' Salary

### Overview

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3.2.1. Salaries payable to Members and officeholders are set out in Table 1 of the 2026 Determination. A Member's salary is £67,200 p.a. from the 1 April 2026. The current level of remuneration is published on the Assembly website, but is included in Annex 3.1 of this document for ease of reference.

3.2.2. Members' salaries are pro-rata from the date that a Member takes up office, i.e. the date that the Member gives the Undertaking and signs the Roll of Membership. Where a Member leaves the Assembly, salary is paid up to, and including, the last day in office.

3.2.3. Officeholders' salaries are payable for each day or part of a day that the office is held. Where a Member holds more than one office e.g. is a Member of the Assembly Commission and Speaker, only the salary for the highest paid category of office is paid.

3.2.4. If a Member is also a salaried officeholder in the House of Lords, they will not receive a Member's salary. If they are an officeholder in the Assembly, they will only be entitled to the additional amount attributable to that office.

3.2.5. For any period a Member is imprisoned, the Member's salary is reduced by 90%.

### Members' Salaries - getting started

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3.2.6. On joining the Assembly, following an election, or on co-option into the Assembly during a mandate, Members are required to fill in a **Member's Information Form (N1)**. Should a Member not have a P45, an **Employee Starter Checklist** should also be completed and returned to the Pay and Pensions team. Payment of salary cannot commence until this form is received.

3.2.7. Payment is made on a monthly basis, by BACS, on the third working day prior to the end of each month. These payments are made automatically, up to and including a Member's last day of office.

3.2.8. As required by the 2026 Determination salaries must be paid into a bank or building society account for which the Member, or the Member and their spouse/civil partner/cohabitee, are the only signatories. The **Member's Information Form (N1)** requires a Member to provide confirmation of this.

3.2.9. Members must notify the Pay and Pensions team, immediately should any personal information change.

### Members' Salaries – informing changes

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3.2.10. Should a Member be appointed as an officeholder and that role carries additional remuneration, they must inform the Pay and Pensions team by completing a **Member Officeholders Detail Form (C1)**, which is found in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal.

3.2.11. Any change in bank account details during a mandate, should be notified to the Payroll and Pensions team using a **Change of Bank Details Form B1 (M)**. This can be found in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal.

## Members' Salaries - during an Election

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3.2.12. Following dissolution of the Assembly, i.e. during an election period, there are a number of specific rules that apply in relation to Members' and officeholders' salaries. In these circumstances the Finance Office issues separate and specific guidance. However, a summary is provided below.

3.2.13. While Members cease to be Members at dissolution of the Assembly, specific provisions are made in section 47 (10) (b) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 in relation to the payment of salaries and allowances. This section provides that, for the purpose of paying salaries and allowances, a person who is a Member of the Assembly immediately before dissolution, and is nominated as a candidate at the subsequent election, shall be treated as if they were a member of the Assembly until the end of the day of the poll for that election.

3.2.14. In practice, this means that salaries cease to be paid at dissolution for those Members who are not standing. However, for those Members standing, they continue to be paid up to and including the date of the poll. Following the election, salaries cease until new and returning Members, give the Undertaking and sign the Roll of Membership for the newly elected Assembly.

3.2.15. The rules relating to officeholders are specific to the office that is held and this is covered in detail in the election guidance that is issued. However, Members may wish to note, in any year following an election of the Assembly, the provisions of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014 may apply, if an individual who is an elected representative for the Houses of Parliament at Westminster is also elected as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. In these circumstances Members have a period of eight days to decide which seat they wish to take up before they are disqualified from the Assembly.

3.2.16. The rules relating to salaries payable in the period following an election, and also during periods where the offices of First and Deputy First Ministers become vacant, are set out in [the 2026 Determination](#), this sets out the salary changes applicable after various periods of the Assembly not sitting. Further information on this is available in the [Explanatory notes relating to the Assembly Members \(Salaries\) Determination \(Northern Ireland\) 2026](#).

## 3.3 Members' Pensions

### Overview

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3.3.1. On appointment to the Assembly, all Members are automatically enrolled into the Career Average Revalued Earnings (CARE) section of the AMP Scheme, with pension deductions commencing at a rate of 9% of their monthly salary.

3.3.2. As a member of the AMP Scheme, Members build up a pension benefit based on how much they earn each year between 1 April and 31 March. Each year, 2% of these earnings is added to the accruing pension benefit. The pension benefits build up based on the salary payable in the role as a Member. However, where additional remuneration is paid for holding an office, Members will also receive a separate pension benefit in relation to that salary. The total pension accrued is revalued in line with indexes, each year that Members are in active membership. By way of an example, a Member, earning £67,200 in the Scheme year, will add £1,344 to their annual CARE pension benefit.

3.3.3. Membership of the Scheme is a valuable part of the remuneration package for Members. Currently the Assembly Commission contributes the equivalent of 17.1% of Members' monthly salary towards the pension. Pension contributions are deducted from gross pay before calculations for tax, which means Members receive full tax relief on their contributions.

3.3.4. A notable benefit of the AMP Scheme is that it provides life cover while individuals are serving as Members, paying out a lump sum of twice the salary in the event of death in service. The lump sum is payable to whomever Members have nominated to receive the benefit.

## Pension – getting started

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3.3.5. Upon appointment, Members are automatically enrolled in the Scheme. However, participation in the AMP Scheme is not mandatory, and Members may choose to opt out. To do so, Members should contact the administration team at ISIO, who will provide the necessary paperwork. Members should carefully consider the valuable benefits they would forgo by opting out.

3.3.6. Further information on the AMP Scheme and its benefits can be found in the summary guidance 'The Assembly Members Pension Scheme (NI) 2016: Your Pension Benefits Explained' which has been prepared by the Finance Office and is available in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal. This information is also provided to all Members in the welcome pack provided when they start at the Assembly.

3.3.7. All correspondence, including the submission of completed forms, should be sent directly to ISIO.

3.3.8. Queries on pension related issues should, in the first instance, be sent to the ISIO team at the following address:

Northern Ireland Assembly Members' Pensions Team  
ISIO c/o SPS  
PO BOX 4916  
Interface Business Park  
SN4 4RX

Email: [AMPS@isio.com](mailto:AMPS@isio.com)  
Phone: Contract Manager: 0330 135 5742

## 3.4 Members' Allowances

### Overview

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3.4.1. Under the provisions of Part 2 of the 2025 Determination, Members are entitled to annual travel allowances. There are two travel allowances payable:

- a) Constituency Travel Allowance (CTA); and
- b) Assembly Travel Allowance (ATA).

3.4.2. Both of the allowances are determined as fixed amounts, per annum, depending on which constituency the Member represents. While CTA and ATA are annual amounts, for administrative purposes only, both allowances are paid monthly, as a taxable flat rate allowance. As such, they are paid through the payroll system.

3.4.3. CTA has no eligibility criteria. However, entitlement to the full amount of ATA is subject to meeting certain eligibility criteria.

3.4.4. The rates are set out in Tables 1 and 2 of the 2025 Determination. The current amounts payable are produced at Annex 3.2 for ease of reference.

### Constituency Travel Allowance (CTA)

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3.4.5. CTA is payable for travel within a Member's constituency on Assembly business. This remains in payment as long as a Member is in office. For those Members who either leave or are co-opted to the Assembly part way through the year, the amount payable is calculated on a pro-rata basis.

3.4.6. Following dissolution of the Assembly, CTA ceases to be paid at the date of dissolution for those Members not standing for re-election. For those Members who are standing for re-election, it continues to be paid, up to, and including, the date of the poll. However, following the election, payments of CTA cease and recommence, for new and returning Members, once the Undertaking is given and the Roll of Membership is signed.

### Assembly Travel Allowance (ATA)

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3.4.7. ATA is payable for travel from a Member's constituency office to Parliament Buildings when travelling on Assembly business. For those Members who either leave, or are co-opted to the Assembly part way through the year, this amount is calculated on a pro-rata basis.

3.4.8. While Members are paid the full annual allowance each year, entitlement is dependent on a Member attending Parliament Buildings for 72, or more, qualifying days a year. Under the 2025 Determination, a 'qualifying day' is defined as any day where a Member attends Parliament Buildings to carry out their functions as a Member.

3.4.9. Members must keep a record of attendance at Parliament Buildings throughout the year. This record must be submitted as part of the **Declaration of Compliance (MF12)** at the end of the year. Where the minimum attendance is not achieved, the allowance is reduced by 1% for each day below the minimum. Members can opt to suspend receiving their monthly ATA payments (see paragraph over on page 15).

## Attendance Records

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3.4.10. Members are required to keep records of attendance at Parliament Buildings. The format of the attendance records is not prescribed. However, as a minimum, the date of attendance at Parliament Buildings and the activity undertaken must be supplied. Attendance records must be submitted to the MFS team each year.

3.4.11. Members may attend Parliament Buildings for a range of reasons. However, Members should be mindful that ATA, like all financial support, is intended to enable Members to carry out their functions as Members. Attendance for activities which do not constitute functions as a Member is outside the scope of ATA and, as such, will be discounted as part of the annual verification exercise.

3.4.12. Therefore, in advance of submitting attendance records, Members may find it helpful to consider the following examples of admissible and inadmissible activities:

### Admissible

- Attending a Commission Meeting;
- Attending a meeting of the Pension Trustees;
- Hosting a public event in the Long Gallery or other function room (only if the event requires cross-party sponsorship);
- Meeting a delegation of constituents, charity representatives, union representatives or a residents' association (for example);
- Hosting a visit and/or tour of Parliament Buildings;
- Meeting a school group;
- Meeting support staff who are based in Parliament Buildings;
- Meeting with Assembly Commission staff, e.g. Finance Office, RaISe, IS or Parliamentary Services staff;
- Collecting stationery supplies;
- Attending a press conference or media interview (however this depends on the subject matter and does not include political negotiations); or
- Establishing a constituency service at Parliament Buildings.

### Inadmissible

- Attending a party meeting or briefing related to party political issues or Executive business;
- Hosting a public event sponsored by the party; or
- Attending a press conference or media interview related to party political or Executive business.

## Impact of Using an Official Car on ATA

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3.4.13. As set out in paragraph 18 (5) of the 2025 Determination, the ATA is not payable to a Member who has use of an official car to travel to Parliament Buildings.

3.4.14. For administrative purposes, it is assumed that where a Member is eligible to make use of an official car, the official car is used for all travel to the Parliament Buildings. Therefore, no payments will be made for the dates that the official car is available. However, in any quarter should an official car not be used to attend the Parliament Buildings, the Member should notify the Pay and Pensions team in writing with details of the dates when privately owned transport was used. A retrospective payment of ATA will be made for these dates.

3.4.15. Members should use the **Employment Changes form (EC1)** to inform MFS team if they have access to an official car for full or part of the year.

## ATA Annual Declaration

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3.4.16. Members are required to keep records of attendance at Parliament Buildings and make an annual declaration of the number of days attended on the **Declaration of Compliance (MF12)**. This must be supported by the submission of the attendance records.

3.4.17. The MFS team will contact Members in March each year to remind them of the need to submit records. Once the attendance records are checked and the amount of ATA due has been verified, the Payroll and Pensions team will write to Members in early May to notify them of the outcome.

3.4.18. Where the minimum attendance has not been achieved, recoupment of any overpayment will be sought from the Member under the provisions of paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination. This will be achieved either by a direct repayment from the Member, or, through a reduction in the monthly payments of ATA in the subsequent tax year.

## Suspending ATA

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3.4.19. Members are encouraged to monitor their attendance against the minimum requirement throughout the year. Where Members anticipate not meeting the minimum requirement, they may wish to suspend receipt of ATA to avoid an overpayment arising. If Members wish to avail of this option, they should complete the **Employment Changes Form (EC1)** and submit this to the Payroll and Pensions team.

3.4.20. Opting to suspend the receipt of ATA must be undertaken at the start of each financial year, it does not automatically apply from one year to the next. Suspension will be applied for whole months. For those Members who have suspended the receipt of ATA, following the verification of attendance records at year end, where minimum attendance has been achieved, a one-off retrospective lump sum payment of ATA will be made.

## 3.5 Incidental Costs of Parliamentary Travel

3.5.1. It is recognised that there may be occasions where a Member will be required to undertake travel associated with a wider role within the Assembly, not just on constituency business. The primary costs of such travel (for example flights and accommodation) are met directly by the Assembly Commission and will be arranged by Assembly Commission staff on behalf of Members. Members may also incur incidental costs when undertaking such travel. However, there is no provision within the 2025 Determination to recover these incidental costs.

3.5.2. Travel associated with a Member’s wider role within the Assembly is referred to as ‘Parliamentary Travel’, the guidance for which is set out in the ‘Incidental Costs of Parliamentary Travel’ guidance document.

3.5.3. Parliamentary travel does not include any travel to Parliament Buildings, but includes travel on Committee business to external locations, or to participate in a Committee visit / research trip to a location other than Parliament Buildings. It may also include travel to attend meetings or events associated with membership of other Parliamentary bodies, such as the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) or the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association.

3.5.4. The definition of Parliamentary Travel is narrow and does not extend beyond the situations set out above. For the avoidance of doubt it does not include any travel to Parliament Buildings, travel within a Member’s constituency, or travel associated with any party political activity.

3.5.5. Where it is anticipated that a Member will incur incidental costs while undertaking Parliamentary Travel, costs must be authorised **prior** to travelling.

3.5.6. Further information on the framework for ‘Incidental Costs of Parliamentary Travel’, including examples of admissible expenditure, can be obtained in a copy of the guidance document, which is available in the Finance Office section of the Members’ Portal.

*Section 3 – Associated Annexes:*

<i>Annex 3.1</i>	<i>Table 1 2026 Determination – Updated Members’ Salaries;</i>
<i>Annex 3.2</i>	<i>Tables 1 &amp; 2 from the 2025 Determination</i>
	<i>– Updated Travel allowances</i>
	<i>Table 4 – Updated Staff Travel Allowance</i>

## 4 Support Staff Costs

### 4.1 Support Staff Cost Recovery Overview

4.1.1. In order to assist them in carrying out their functions as a Member, Members may wish to employ support staff and recover the associated employment costs. The recovery of such costs is provided for under Part 3 of the 2025 Determination.

4.1.2. The purpose of this Part of the 2025 Determination is to ensure Members do not suffer a financial detriment by reason of the staff costs they incur in connection with the exercise of their functions as a Member. However, it is not to allow political parties to benefit from the costs incurred, or to allow the resources made available to Members to be used for party political activities, including assisting election campaigning.

4.1.3. There are a number of very specific criteria which must be met in order to recover support staff costs. These are set out in paragraphs 25 – 28 of the 2025 Determination.

4.1.4. Failure to abide by the underlying Principles, or to meet these criteria, will mean that costs are not recoverable, and Members will become personally liable for any support staff costs arising from employment arrangements.

4.1.5. This chapter provides Members with advice and guidance on the processes to be followed and the compliance requirements that must be met, in order to recover support staff costs.

#### Support Staff costs – getting started

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4.1.6. Once Members have given the Undertaking and signed the Roll of Membership, and registered with the Finance Office (by completing the **Member's Information Form (N1)**), they may begin recovering the costs associated with employing staff. The recovery of costs for support staff may continue for up to three months after a Member ceases to be a Member, but only when staff continue to support Members and assist with winding up their Assembly business.

4.1.7. It is important to note that Members are the employer; support staff are not employed by the Assembly Commission. While the Assembly Commission provides advice and support to Members in their role as employers, employment related issues are, in general, a matter for each Member.

4.1.8. A Member may employ staff either directly, or by engaging the services of a temporary work agency. In order to avail of the funding, support staff must be directly paid through the payroll bureau operated by the Assembly Commission or directly by the temporary work agency. It is not possible for Members to pay staff and then seek recovery.

4.1.9. In order to assist Members in achieving compliance, a number of payroll forms are available electronically in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal. Use of these forms will ensure the correct information is supplied, appropriate certification is provided and payments are processed efficiently. A summary of key information has also been included on many of the forms to guide Members. These forms are included in the list of forms given in Annex 1.5 and general guidance on submitting forms can be found in the [Submission Process](#)

#### Support staff costs – financial support

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4.1.10. Part 3 of the 2025 Determination lists the support staff costs which may be recovered in 5 different categories. The table below provides a high-level overview of what may be recovered under each of these categories. The current year's updated funding allowances are set out in annex 4.1 table 1.

<b>Table 1 : Summary of support staff funding by category</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>What is covered</b>	<b>Value</b>
Category 1	Category 1 is a Members main budget for the recovery of support staff salaries	- Annual Funding limit applies - Increased each year
Category 2	Covers the costs of HR, legal or general employment related costs associated with the employment of staff.  Staff travel can also be recovered	- Annual Funding limit applies - Increased each year  - Annual Funding limit applies, per constituency
Category 3	Covers ancillary staff costs like employers' contributions to National Insurance, employers' contributions to pension schemes and statutory redundancy	-Not capped
Category 4	When a Member has reduced number of permanent staff as a result of staff absences, Category 4 funding covers the cost of temporary replacement staff	Value is linked to the staff member being replaced
Category 5	When a Member is absent due to maternity, adoption or shared paternity, Category 5, covers the cost of additional staff to support the Member.	- Funding limit applies - Increased each year - Payable for maximum of 6 months

## 4.2 Members' Employment Advice & Guidance

4.2.1. While this guidance sets out the different categories of funding available to Members in order to recruit, pay, support, train and develop support staff, Members should be aware that the Assembly Commission also provides a range of resources to support Members in their role as employers.

4.2.2. The Assembly Commission's HR Office provides HR services to Members. Members can also avail of a legal expenses insurance policy, which gives Members access to specialist advice on employment related issues and provides assistance for any legal disputes which may arise relating to employment matters.

## HR Services to Members

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4.2.3. In their role as employers, Members must bear certain responsibilities and handle all employment-related activities for their staff. However, the HR Office is available to provide support and advice.

4.2.4. The HR service provided to Members includes two key aspects:

- a) **Template Guidance Documents:** These include template policies, procedures and forms covering typical HR matters. These documents can be found in the HR Services section of the Members' Portal; and
- b) **Advice and Guidance:** This is provided for a range of employment matters.

4.2.5. These guidance documents offer practical advice and assist Members in day-to-day matters such as recruitment and employee management. They are consistent with applicable employment law.

4.2.6. Members are strongly encouraged to use these documents to meet their employment duties and to follow legally compliant procedures, as detailed in paragraph [4.2.13](#). Should they choose to use them, Members should direct their staff to these documents so that they understand how they will be managed.

4.2.7. The following guidance notes are currently available:

- Recruitment;
- Probation and On-boarding;
- Discipline;
- Grievance;
- Flexible working;
- Maternity, Paternity and Adoption
- Performance Management; and
- Sick Absence.

4.2.8. The HR Office is available to advise on the implementation of these guidance documents, or any other specific HR or employment related issue. The HR Office can be contacted by email: [hrrservicestomembers@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:hrrservicestomembers@niassembly.gov.uk) or by phone on 028 905 20327.

4.2.9. Members should be aware that as they are the employer, the HR Office cannot undertake specific activities in relation to employment, such as recruitment, managing attendance, disciplinary or performance related matters.

4.2.10. Should a Member consider it necessary to have other procedures, not listed above, in place, the development and drafting of these will be a matter for the Member themselves. The HR Office and the legal expenses insurance provider are unable to review or advise on such procedures. Members are strongly advised to ensure any additional policies comply with current employment legislation.

4.2.11. Costs incurred in respect of the development or drafting of these additional procedures can be recovered under Constituency Office Operating Costs or Category 2. Members should be aware of the importance of following legally compliant procedures – see paragraph [4.2.13](#).

## Insurance

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4.2.12. While most employment related issues will be resolved between a Member and their staff, sometimes additional support or advice is necessary. In order to assist Members further, the Assembly Commission has put in place a specialist legal expenses insurance policy. If required, the policy may provide legal assistance in the event of an employment related dispute, or to cover the legal costs associated with a dispute. Additional information on the policy can be found in the [Insurance](#) section of this document.

4.2.13. Members should be aware that it is a condition of the policy that appropriate HR support has been availed of and appropriate advice has been followed. The guidance notes provided by the HR Office are consistent with applicable employment law. To protect their position as an employer against allegations or claims of wrongful employment acts, Members are advised to follow these guidance notes. Where a Member chooses to not to follow the guidance, or implements additional policies, they risk any resulting employment related claims not being covered under the policy. If a Members has any concerns around policies and procedures they should contact the HR Office.

## 4.3 New Staff

4.3.1. There are important considerations for Members to reflect on before recruiting new staff or processing contractual changes for existing staff. The following guidance should assist Members in those decisions and processes.

### Budget Implications

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4.3.2. The annual funding available to Members to recover the contractual costs of support staff salaries, or to recruit, support, train and develop staff are maximum amounts which must not be exceeded. Therefore, before staff are recruited, contracts amended or payments are authorised, Members must consider the financial implications of such decisions. The Pay and Pension team can assist Members with budget planning.

4.3.3. The main fund Members will use to fund employment costs is 'Category 1' Support staff costs. The annual maximum amount of Category 1 costs which may be recovered is increased or decreased each year by reference to the increase or decrease applied to salaries paid to staff employed by the Assembly Commission in the previous year. The current year's budget is set out in Annex 4.1 table 1

4.3.4. Support staff costs which can be recovered under Category 1 include: –

- a) contractual payments to which the employee is entitled under a contract of employment (for example, contractual salary, contractual sick pay, contractual maternity pay, and contractual paternity pay),
- b) statutory payments to which the employee is entitled in the course of employment (for example, statutory sick pay, statutory maternity pay, or statutory paternity pay) not including statutory redundancy pay, and
- c) payments made to a temporary work agency in respect of the salary of an agency worker.

4.3.5. There are some situations where the costs of employing new members of staff are not recoverable under the Category 1 costs budget:

- a) Where Members are seeking support staff to replace a permanent member of staff who is temporarily absent, for example on maternity leave, these staff costs are recovered separately under Category 4. See [Replacement Staff Costs](#)
- b) Where Members are seeking additional support to assist them when the Member is absent due to maternity, adoption or shared paternity, these staff costs are recovered under Category 5. See [Additional Support Costs](#).

4.3.6. On receipt of instructions to add staff to the payroll or to process payroll amendments, such as the payment of overtime hours, to increase the hours of part-time workers, or to effect an annual pay rise the Payroll and Pensions team will assess the associated impact on the budget. Should the addition or change cause the Member to exceed the annual budget, the paperwork will be returned to the Member without any change being made.

### Decide on job role, grade and salary

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4.3.7. Deciding on the job role required and the appropriate grade for that job role is a matter for the Member as the employer. However, Members may find it helpful to refer to the Recruitment Guidance Notes prepared by the HR Office, which include sample job descriptions for typical support staff roles. The guidance notes can be found in the HR Section of the Members' Portal: [Best Practice Guidance for Members: Recruitment](#).

4.3.8. All staff and temporary agency workers must be paid according to the salary scale appropriate to their grade. These are set out in Table 4 of the 2025 Determination, but an updated table showing the current year's annual salaries and hourly rates is set out in annex 4.1 table 2.


4.3.9. For the purposes of recovering support staff costs, those staff employed must be graded as one of the grades provided for under Part 3 of the 2025 Determination (i.e. Grades 1, 2 or 3). New members of staff and temporary agency workers must commence their salary on the minimum point of the appropriate scale. No grade may exceed the maximum point on the scale.

4.3.10. Where a member of staff (but not a person engaged via a temporary work agency) has ended a period of employment with another Member (A), within 3 months of being employed by a Member (B) that Member may choose to pay the member of staff at the same pay point as they were paid by Member (A).

## Consider contract and hours

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4.3.11. All staff must be employed as individuals; they cannot be, for example, be a company.

4.3.12. Staff **must** be employed on the Members' Staff Contract of Employment, the template for which is published separately by the Assembly Commission, and this contract must be the exclusive statement of the terms of employment. An electronic version of this contract is available in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal.

4.3.13. The contract should be completed in full. No payments for support staff costs will be payable until this is received along with the new starter payroll forms.

4.3.14. Members must not require their staff to work more than 37 hours per week. Within the weekly limit on hours, (i.e. the 37 hour limit for an individual) a Member may choose to pay staff overtime for additional hours worked, however this is payable at the normal hourly rate, no premiums can be paid. Any additional hours should be claimed on an **Additional Hours Form (AH1)**.

4.3.15. Where more than one Member employs an individual, they must not be required to work more than 37 hours per week in total, for all Members. The number of hours payable to staff will be closely monitored by the Pay and Pensions team, and should an amendment to payroll be received that would cause a Member to breach any of the conditions relating to hours, or budget limits, it will be returned to the Member unprocessed.

## Running a Recruitment Campaign

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4.3.16. One of the specific requirements of the 2025 Determination, in relation to the recovery of support staff costs, is that all employees **must** be appointed on merit, after having been identified by a fair and open competition or engaged on a temporary basis, via a temporary work agency (paragraph 27 (2) (b) refers). Members must consider how best to carry out a fair and open competition in order to recruit staff. The HR Office has prepared specific guidance notes on this matter, to ensure that best practice is followed. This guide is available in the HR section of the Members' Portal:

<https://niassembly.sharepoint.com/sites/MembersIntranet-HR/SitePages/recruitment.aspx>

4.3.17. Members must keep records sufficient to show that a fair and open recruitment competition has been undertaken and that the employee was appointed on merit. To evidence compliance, at the end of a recruitment process, Members will submit a **Declaration of Compliance on Recruitment (DC1) form**. As part of this declaration, a copy of the advertisement, as advertised, must be submitted. If advertising online, links can expire once a competition is no longer active. Therefore, it is advised that Members take a screen shot of the advert to submit with the DC1 form. A copy of the job description and a copy of the person specification must also be submitted. Members should ensure that their name and details of the employment offered, such as the job title, job description, place of work, grade and hours, is included in each advert.

4.3.18. Members may produce a merit list of appointable candidates as a result of a recruitment competition. Merit lists are a helpful mechanism to fill any future permanent or fixed term opportunities, for the same post, as long the list is 'live'. Merit lists expire after a pre-defined period of time, such as a year or 18 months. A copy of the signed merit list must be submitted with the **Declaration of Compliance on Recruitment (DC1) form**.

4.3.19. Should a Member wish to fill a vacancy from an active merit list, the Member must submit a copy of the merit list with the new starter documentation to evidence that the individual was recruited in a fair and open competition.

## Consider using agency staff

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4.3.20. It is recommended that all staff are employed through a recruitment competition in order to meet the requirements of the 2025 Determination. However, should a Member wish to use the services of a temporary work agency to engage a temporary worker, they may do so.

4.3.21. For the avoidance of doubt, use of a temporary work agency must be for the engagement of temporary workers only. It cannot, and will not, replace the requirement for permanent members of staff to be engaged on merit, following a fair and open competition.

4.3.22. Temporary workers, engaged through a temporary work agency, will be paid by the temporary work agency. Reimbursement to the temporary work agency will be made on production of an invoice. The Member must complete a **Temporary Support Staff Registration Form (AG2)** and send it and the contract letter from the temporary work agency to the Finance Office at the earliest opportunity. It is recommended that these are sent prior to the temporary agency worker starting work.

4.3.23. Members should check the invoices received from the temporary work agency for accuracy and then forward them to the Claims team for payment. Payments will be made to the temporary work agency directly. Details on how to claim for **Direct Payment (MF4)** are covered in the [Methods of claiming - Direct Payment](#) section of this Administration Guide. If processing the invoice would exceed the annual limit for Category 1 costs, taking into account existing salary commitments, the claim will not be processed and will be returned unpaid.

## Consider whether successful candidate is associated or connected

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4.3.24. A Member cannot recover the salary costs for more than one person who is a 'connected person', as defined in paragraph 44 of the 2025 Determination. In order to recover the salary of a connected person, the Member must make a formal declaration of: (i) the name of the connected person, (ii) the details of the connection, and (iii) the nature of the employment. This is undertaken on the **New Support Staff Details Form (A1)**. This also includes any staff member engaged on a temporary basis from a temporary work agency.

4.3.25. If a Member ought reasonably to have known about the connection and fails to make a declaration, or a declaration is not accurate and the Member knows it is not accurate, they will not be entitled to recover support staff costs.

4.3.26. While the 2025 Determination does not limit the number of ‘associated persons’ who may be employed or engaged via a temporary work agency, Members are required to make an additional declaration. Associated persons are defined in paragraph 45 of the 2025 Determination. This declaration must state: (i) the name of the associated person, (ii) the details of the association, and (iii) the nature of the employment. Failure to make these declarations accurately, or in a timely manner will mean that support staff costs cannot be paid. This declaration is also included on the **New Support Staff Details Form (A1)**.

4.3.27. The declarations of associated, or connected persons should reflect the declarations held on the Register of Members’ Interests. More information can be found about the Register on the Members Portal: [Register of Members’ Interests](#).

## Submitting new starter documents to the Finance Office

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4.3.28. Once Members have successfully recruited their staff they may initiate payments to staff, by completing and submitting the following documents:

- a) **New Support Staff Details Form (A1);**
- b) **P45 or Employee Starter Checklist;**
- c) **Declaration of Compliance on Recruitment (DC1)** (and associated paperwork as detailed on the DC1, such as the advert.); and
- d) **Fully completed signed contract of employment.**

4.3.29. Evidence of the recruitment process undertaken will be required before staff are added to the payroll. Payments for support staff will not commence unless all of the appropriate original documentation is received. Copies of the forms are available in the Finance Office section of the Members Portal.

4.3.30. Instructions to add individuals to payroll or to make amendments must be received by the 12th calendar day each month, in order to ensure that these are reflected in the correct month’s payroll. Anything received after that date will not be processed, but instead will be processed the following month. Additional information on submitting forms can be found in the [Submission Process](#)

## Support Staff Declaration

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4.3.31. As part of the onboarding process of new staff, Members must require employees to complete a **Support Staff Declaration (DC 2)** form. This declaration is a requirement resulting from the Review of the Use of Certain Allowances Under the Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016 report published on 14 January 2025. The declaration provides support staff with the opportunity to declare whether they are currently undertaking any political party activities and/or whether they are in receipt of any remuneration from public funds.

4.3.32. Members should ensure that support staff are aware that they must update the form should their circumstances change during the year, for example, should the activity cease, or the hours undertaken change, or remuneration from public funds commences or ceases etc.

4.3.33. Members are required to certify the completion of the declaration as part of the submission of the **Declaration of Compliance on Recruitment (DC1)**. However, Members are **not required** to submit this form to the Finance Office; instead they must retain it in line with [Retention of Records](#) section and make it available for audit purposes, should it be a requirement.

4.3.34. Members should continue to monitor support staff declarations throughout the year. As part of the process to complete the annual Declaration of Compliance, Members will now be required to review the **Support Staff Declarations (Form DC2)** held for each employee and ensure they are accurate, and up to date. Members should then certify this when the **Annual Declaration of Compliance (MF12)** is completed and submitted to the Finance Office at year end.

## Processing Payment

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4.3.35. Payments to support staff will continue to be paid on contractual terms notified to the Pay and Pensions team, until a Member informs the team of any change.

4.3.36. Payments to support staff will only be paid into a bank, or building society, account for which the member of support staff, or the support staff and their spouse/civil partner/cohabitant, are the only signatories. This must be confirmed in writing on the **New Support Staff Details Form (A1)** which is used to initiate salary payments.

## 4.4 Processing Employment Changes

4.4.1. Managing changes to employment terms and conditions, such as flexible working arrangements, is a matter for each Member in their role as an employer. However, support and guidance notes are available from the HR Office as part of its services to Members. It is recommended that Members read these notes before making contractual changes to their support staff contracts. See [Members' Employment Advice & Guidance](#) section of this Administration Guide for more details.

4.4.2. **All** contractual changes **must** be notified to the Pay and Pensions Team, to ensure payments to employees remain accurate and complete.

## Check Budget

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4.4.3. Members are advised to assess the budgetary impact of all payroll changes before making any changes to contracts or authorising payments. The Pay and Pension team can assist Members with budget planning.

## Bank Details and Address Details

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4.4.4. Any change in bank account details for support staff should be notified to the Pay and Pensions team using a **Change of Bank Details Form (B1)**, which can be found in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal. If the change is submitted after the cut-off date for submissions to payroll, contact the Pay and Pensions team who can advise if the revised bank details will be applied in the month, or if the payment will be paid into the previously supplied bank account.

4.4.5. Support staff address details can be updated directly by the staff member through self-service in iTrent. Instructions on how to access iTrent self-service can be found in the Finance Office section of Members' Portal.

## Performance Review

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4.4.6. Subject to satisfactory performance of duties, on 1 April, and only after 7 months' service (i.e. the member of staff or the temporary agency worker must have been employed by the Member before 1 September in the preceding calendar year), the Member may move staff from pay point 1 to pay point 2 on the salary scale, as set out in Table 3 of the 2025 Determination. Incremental increases are not automatically applied each year. Members must instruct the Payroll and Pensions team to effect the change by completing and submitting a **Support Staff Performance Review Pay Increase Form (PF1)** for each member of staff.

4.4.7. Where an increase in salary would result in the total cost payable for Category 1 costs exceeding the annual limit, Members may elect not to increase the salary of all support staff or temporary agency workers, notwithstanding that they have satisfactorily performed their duties.

## Contract Change

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4.4.8. Any changes to support staff contractual arrangements, such as a change of hours, or the implementation of flexible working arrangements etc. should be notified to the Pay and Pensions team using the **Support Staff Contract Amendment Form (A2)**.

4.4.9. If the contract change relates to a change in hours, a flexible working request must be completed. Members may find it helpful to refer to the Flexible Working Guidance Notes found on the HR Office section of the Members' Portal: [Best Practice Guidance for Members: Recruitment](#). In advance of making changes, Members should consider the budgetary impact and whether the staff member works for multiple Members. It is recommended that Members contact the Pay and Pensions team in advance of submission to ensure Category 1 funding limit and 37 hour rule are not breached.

## Additional Hours

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4.4.10. A Member may choose to pay staff overtime for additional hours worked, however this is payable at the normal hourly rate, no premiums can be paid. Any additional hours should be claimed on an **Additional Hours Form (AH1)**.

## Managing Attendance and Absences

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4.4.11. There are a number of payroll processes that need to be undertaken for sick absences and those absences associated with maternity, paternity or adoption leave, which are dealt with in this section.

4.4.12. Statutory payments for sick, or maternity, paternity or adoption absences are augmented by contractual entitlements for support staff. Early engagement with the Pay and Pensions team is advised should any of these circumstances arise to ensure that support staff receive their full contractual entitlements.

4.4.13. Documentation in relation to sick absences or maternity / adoption leave should be checked and a copy retained by the Member for audit purposes. However, notification of absences should be made to the Pay and Pensions teams by completing and submitting the appropriate form.

4.4.14. Temporary replacement staff can be employed to cover staff absences – see section 4.6.

4.4.15. Should a Member need advice on any absence or attendance related matters, best practice guidance has been prepared to assist Members. This guidance is available from the HR Office section on the Members' Portal.

## Sick Absence

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4.4.16. For sick related absences, Members should submit a **Support Staff Sick Absence Form (SA1)** as soon as possible and for absences over 7 days a copy of a 'fit note' should also be attached. For continuing absences, Members should continue to supply fit notes to Pay and Pensions team as, and when, they receive them. Contractual sick pay will continue to be paid in accordance with the contract until further notification is received from the Member. Therefore timely notification of a support staff's return to work is important, to avoid any overpayments of sick pay. This should be undertaken by completing and submitting a **Notification of Resumption of Duties Form (SA2)**.

## Family Absence

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4.4.17. For maternity, paternity or adoption related absences, Members should complete and submit a **Support Staff Maternity Form (M1)**, **Support Staff Paternity Form (P1)** or **Support Staff Adoption Form (AA1)** as soon as practicable, and no later than 4 weeks before the anticipated date of leave. There are a number of contractual conditions that must be met in order for such payments to be made. These are detailed in the form and by submitting the forms Members are verifying that these conditions have been met.

4.4.18. Employee rights are not affected while staff are on maternity, adoption or shared parental leave. Employees can work up to 10 days during such periods of leave (20 days for shared parental leave). These are called 'keeping in touch (KIT) days'. KIT days are optional and both the employee and employer must agree to them.

4.4.19. Should Members wish to pay for KIT days they must agree with the member of staff what work will be undertaken, before they come into work. Rights to maternity or adoption leave are not affected by taking KIT days. To arrange payment of KIT days Members should complete and submit the **Maternity Leave: Keeping in Touch Days Form (K1)**.

## 4.5 Processing Leavers & Redundancy

4.5.1. Early notification of leavers is essential to avoid overpayments to staff and to ensure sufficient budget cover remains to make any appropriate contractual payments.

4.5.2. When a member of support staff leaves Members must complete and submit a **Leaver Notification Form (L1)** for each member of staff who is leaving.

4.5.3. Should a Member need to make a member of support staff redundant, separate guidance has been prepared to assist Members with this process. This guidance is available on the HR Office section of the Members' Portal. Redundancy may arise for a number of reasons, including when a Member either resigns from the Assembly, chooses not to stand for re-election, or is not re-elected following an Assembly Election.

4.5.4. While advice may be sought from the HR Office on the process of redundancy, it is important to note that there are a number of payroll processes that must be completed.

4.5.5. Once it has been decided that support staff are to be made redundant, Members should contact the Pay and Pensions team, to instruct them of their wishes. While statutory redundancy payments are paid directly by the Assembly Commission, there are a number of other considerations for Members, such as statutory notice periods, pay in-lieu of notice (PILON) and pay for annual leave accrued but not taken. Such payments are Category 1 costs and as such have to be considered when monitoring and reviewing the annual budget.

4.5.6. Members should complete and submit the **Support Staff Redundancy Notification Form (RD1) and a Leaver Notification Form (L1)** detailing the last day of employment, the date formal notification was given, payments for annual leave etc.

## Payment to support staff during a period of winding up

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4.5.7. On leaving the Assembly a former Member can recover support staff costs for up to a maximum of three months after the date on which the Member ceases to be a Member. The recovery of costs for salaries, and therefore the payment to support staff, during this period is not an automatic entitlement. More information can be found in the section entitled [Leaving the Assembly](#).

## 4.6 Replacement Staff Costs

4.6.1. Members may recover the costs of temporarily employing or engaging a person to replace a member of their support staff team, where –

- a) the employee is absent from work for a continuous period of at least four weeks by reason of illness, maternity leave, paternity leave or adoption leave,
- b) that employee continues during that period to be paid a salary recoverable under paragraph 33 of the 2025 Determination.

4.6.2. These are recoverable under Category 4 support staff costs. Category 4 costs are paid directly by the Assembly Commission, on behalf of each Member, and as such are not charged against the annual limit for Category 1 costs.

4.6.3. Where a Members wishes to temporarily employ a replacement member of staff, they must be appointed on merit, after having been identified by a fair and open competition, or, engaged via a temporary work agency. They must be paid at pay point 1 of the salary scale, as set out in Table 3 of the 2025 Determination, for the grade of staff they are replacing. Members are advised to ensure the job advertisement makes it clear the role is a temporary one.

4.6.4. In order to claim the costs of replacing a member of staff, Members must complete and submit the same paperwork as required for a permanent member of staff. On submitting paperwork to the Pay and Pensions team, the 'Replacement Staff' section of the form must be clearly annotated, stating whom it is replacing, and how long the arrangements are to remain in place.

## 4.7 Additional Support Costs

4.7.1. Where Members need to be absent from work for an extended period of time due to maternity, adoption or shared leave, additional support is available, paragraph 37 of the 2025 Determination refers.

4.7.2. Category 5 costs may be recovered where -

- a) that Member would, if an employee, be entitled to a period of maternity leave, adoption leave or shared parental leave;
- b) the member does not engage in their full range of functions as a Member; and
- c) the member employs, or engages via a temporary work agency, a person to assist them with certain of their functions as a Member.

4.7.3. This funding is therefore available to cover the costs of employing or engaging additional staff.

4.7.4. The amount of Category 5 support costs that may be recovered by each Member is capped. This amount is increased or decreased each year by reference to the increase or decrease applied to salaries paid to staff employed by the Assembly Commission in the previous year. For the current year's maximum recoverable amount, see annex 4.1, table 1.

4.7.5. Members may recover additional support costs for a maximum of six months, starting from the date on which the condition specified in paragraph 4.7.2 (a) is satisfied.

4.7.6. Category 5 costs are paid directly by the Assembly Commission on behalf of each Member and are not charged against the annual limit for Category 1 costs. They are provided to cover any additional cost of support staff incurred during a period of absence, as described in 4.7.2 (a), when Members are not able to do the full range of functions as a Members

4.7.7. During such a period it is recognised that Members continue to act as elected representatives and, therefore, Members will continue to receive their full salary. Members also continue to have access to all other allowances, recoverable under the 2025 Determination, to assist with them in continuing to carry out their functions as a Members.

### What do members need to do?

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4.7.8. Members who wish to recover additional support costs during a period of parental leave will be required to provide the Finance Office with a Maternity Certificate (Form MAT B1) or a Matching Certificate from an adoption agency, so that the entitlement to additional support can be verified.

4.7.9. Members may find it helpful to consider the following in advance of taking parental leave:

- a) **Contact the MFS team at the earliest opportunity:** Any Member who expects to be unable to engage in the full range of functions as a member, by reason of parental leave is encouraged to contact the MFS team at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate funding arrangements can be put in place.
- b) **Decide whether it is appropriate, or not, to delegate decisions relating to allowances to a proxy representative during a period of absence.** This might relate to constituency office running costs and/or staffing costs. This can be applied for by completing a **Delegation of Financial Authority Form (MF16)**. It is not automatically put in place.

- c) **Decide how communication is to be handled** while absent from work. This might be through a delegated proxy, through the constituency office, or directly. Members should contact the MFS team if they need to update their contact details.

4.7.10. Any period of absence must occur before the end of the first year after the birth or adoption of a child. Members are encouraged to contact the Finance Office should they require an absence prior to the child's arrival.

## Available Funding

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4.7.11. Additional support will be provided for a maximum period of six months.

4.7.12. Members may wish to consider the following options when deciding how additional support will be provided. It could be provided by adopting one, or a combination of several different options. The general conditions set out in Part 3 of the 2025 Determination in relation to appointing and paying staff will also apply to those staff engaged and paid for under Category 5 additional support costs, including the requirement for staff to be appointed on a merit basis, following a fair and open competition. The following options could be adopted during the period when the Member is unable to engage in the full range of functions as a Member:

- a) recruit a temporary full-time person to assist with constituency work;
- b) recruit additional staff on short fixed-term contracts to increase capacity (for example, caseworkers); or
- c) temporarily increase the contracted hours, within statutory limits of existing part-time staff, or pay additional hours to take on additional duties (such as the management of other staff).

4.7.13. Learning and development for staff taking on additional responsibility during the Member's absence can be funded through Category 2 costs.

4.7.14. In order to claim the costs of an additional member of staff, Members must complete and submit the same paperwork as required for a permanent member of staff. On submitting it to the Pay and Pensions team, the additional staff section of the form must be clearly annotated as being for an additional member of staff, stating how long the arrangements are to remain in place. A copy of the Member's MATb1 form or Matching Certificate should also be enclosed.

## Returning to work

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4.7.15. When a Member is ready to recommence the full range of functions as a Member, they must inform the Finance Office, so that recovery of Category 5 costs can be ended correctly and in a timely manner. Where, a Member does not inform the Finance office, but their presence in the Assembly becomes so regular they could reasonably be deemed to have returned to a full range of functions, the recovery of costs will cease. The recovery of Category 5 costs will not be impacted if the Member returns occasionally for the equivalent of KIT days.

## 4.8 Other Staff Costs (Category 2)

4.8.1. In their role as an employer it is recognised that a Member will incur employment related costs, which are recoverable under Category 1. These may be costs associated with staff health and welfare, training and development, recruitment HR or legal issues or general employment related costs. Members may also incur costs reimbursing staff for business related travel. Where such costs are incurred, these are recoverable under Category 2 costs, paragraphs 33 and 34 of the 2025 Determination refers.

4.8.2. With effect from 1 April 2024, the maximum Category 2 cost recoverable per year is **£2,500 per annum**.

4.8.3. In order to recover Category 2 costs, Members should complete and submit either a **Direct Payment form (MF4)** or a **Reimbursement Payment Form (MF5)**. Details on how to claim are covered in the [Methods of claiming - Direct Payment](#) section of this guide.

4.8.4. Members may also seek to recover the costs of staff travel under category 2. The maximum that can be claimed is capped per annum, according to a Member's constituency, and Table 4, showing the maximum allowances per Member, is reproduced in Annex 3.2 for ease of reference. See section on [Staff Travel](#).

4.8.5. Please note that the costs incurred for making reasonable adjustments for staff with disabilities may be a Category 2 cost, or may also be claimed under Disability Costs, depending on the quantum and nature of the costs. See the section on [Disability Costs](#).

### Health and Welfare costs

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4.8.6. Members may claim for health and welfare costs that are associated with supporting staff, such as eyesight tests, display screen equipment assessments and occupational health assessments, where it supports staff to carry their Assembly related employment duties.

### Inspire Workplace Services

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4.8.7. Members' support staff have access to Inspire Workplace Services, the provider of an Employee Assistance Programme. Inspire provides free, independent and confidential counselling advice and support for all permanent support staff for any personal or work-related difficulty. Further information on the scheme is available on the Members' Portal in [Wellbeing](#).

4.8.8. If Members would like to use this service, please contact the HR Office on [hrrservicestomembers@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:hrrservicestomembers@niassembly.gov.uk).

### Staff Training Costs

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4.8.9. As Members may only seek recovery under the 2025 Determination for costs that have been incurred in connection with carrying out their functions as a Member, training for staff must be related to their Assembly related employment duties. This can include training on:

- office skills;
- data protection;

- records management;
- dealing with handling difficult casework;
- training that covers a specific subject area that arises in policy work, correspondence or casework;
- first aid and fire equipment use;
- training to support wellbeing at work such as vicarious trauma training; or
- team-building training.

4.8.10. In order to verify that costs are admissible, the invoice or receipt submitted, must set out the details of the provider, the nature of the training and the names of those staff who undertook the training.

## Staff Recruitment Costs

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4.8.11. When a Member carries out recruitment activity to appoint staff, the costs associated with the recruitment activity may be claimed from Category costs. The types of costs that may be claimed, include but are not limited to: advertising, panel member costs, or room hire etc. In order to verify that costs are admissible, the invoice or receipt submitted should, where applicable, detail the service provided, the number of hours, rate per hour and agreed travelling expenses (mileage and rate paid) incurred by the supplier.

4.8.12. The cost of an AccessNI basic check or Enhanced Disclosure may also be recovered as part of recruitment costs. Where Members are invoiced for the service, they may use either a **Direct Payment form (MF4)** or a **Reimbursement Payment Form (MF5)** to recover the cost.

## Staff Travel Costs

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4.8.13. It is recognised that support staff may need to travel in order to support and assist Members. Under paragraph 34 of the 2025 Determination Members may seek to recover the costs of staff travel. This should be paid directly to the member of support staff. The cost of such travel must be wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in assisting Members to carry out their functions as a Member.

4.8.14. This travel may include:

- a) Travel on constituency business;
- b) Travel to and from Parliament Buildings to the constituency office; or
- c) Travel to attend training events, as approved by the Member.

4.8.15. This provision does not include recovery of costs incurred in travelling from home to a place of work (“ordinary commute”), to attend events that are not associated with a Member’s functions, or that are party political in nature.

4.8.16. As Members are provided with an individual allowance to cover the cost of their own travel within the constituency, or to and from the constituency office to Parliament Buildings, the Support Staff Travel Allowance does not cover the cost of journeys where Members are passengers.

4.8.17. The Staff Travel Allowance is capped per annum, according to a Member’s constituency, and Table 4, showing the maximum allowances per Member is reproduced in Annex 3.2 for ease of reference.

4.8.18. In seeking to recover the costs of support staff travel, there are a number of requirements placed on Members, in their role as employer. Many of the tests for admissibility of such payments derive from the HMRC rules and accepted best practice regarding staff business travel.

4.8.19. Under HMRC rules, travel undertaken by staff for business purposes may be paid free from tax and national insurance contributions only when it is actually undertaken for the performance of employment duties and it is necessary to do so. Travel incurred from home to the normal place of work is deemed as an ordinary commute and if paid is not exempt. Generally the costs associated with such journeys should not be recovered.

4.8.20. For support staff, travel costs may include, but not be limited to the costs associated with the use of public transport, car parking charges, tolls, or mileage payments. For the tax and national insurance exemption to apply, reimbursement of costs cannot include any significant personal benefit staff. There can be no element of profit and it cannot include the payment of any fines or parking tickets, which the individual may have incurred during such travel.

4.8.21. Payments for costs associated with running a privately owned vehicle such as fuel, oil, servicing, and repairs are not tax exempt business costs and as such are not admissible. Instead, where an employee has used their own car to undertake a journey costs should be reimbursed by way of a mileage payment. This is calculated as the number of miles, multiplied by the approved HMRC mileage rate, which is currently 45p per mile. In line with best practice, employees seeking to use their own vehicle for business journeys must ensure that it is insured specifically for business use, that it is suitably maintained and that it is MOT'd.

4.8.22. While payments may be exempt from tax and national insurance contributions under HMRC rules, as the employer, Members are required to make sure that adequate records are kept to demonstrate that payments satisfy the conditions for exemption. This means that Members have a duty to keep adequate records of business journeys, miles travelled etc.; demonstrating that they have certified the actual journey was undertaken, that the costs were actually and necessarily incurred for business purposes and that those miles claimed are correct. Receipts should support all claims where appropriate.

4.8.23. If there is any element of significant personal benefit to the employee the travel costs may not be exempt, and as such, if they are admissible under the 2025 Determination, they may be paid through the payroll and subjected to tax and national insurance deductions.

4.8.24. In order for travel costs to be recovered, support staff must complete a **Support Staff Travel form (SSTF1)**, providing details of the journey, and the reason for travel, attaching any appropriate receipts. Members should ensure that the reason given does not breach guidance in relation to the Data Protection Act 2018 or General Data Protection Regulations 2016 (GDPR) and that no information is included on the form that could identify an individual.

4.8.25. Once the travel claim form is complete, the Member must sign the declaration and ensure that any expense claimed has a corresponding receipt attached to the form. It is the responsibility of the Member to ensure that the details are accurate and that the staff member's motor insurance cover permits business travel. All mileage will be reimbursed at the applicable rate published by HMRC. Forms should then be submitted to the Finance Office for verification and processing.

4.8.26. Where the maximum allowance has already been recovered, claims will be returned to the Member unpaid. Members, who then choose to reimburse their staff individually for such claims, **must** continue to ensure that all HMRC requirements are met in terms of record keeping and verification etc.

4.8.27. It is imperative for all Members to note, that clarification has been sought from HMRC and it has been confirmed that **ALL ORIGINAL DOCUMENTATION MUST BE RETAINED FOR HMRC COMPLIANCE PURPOSES.** Details on how long to retain records can be found in the [Retention of Records](#) section of this guide.

## 4.9 Ancillary Staff Costs, including Support Staff Pension

4.9.1. For all support staff, the following employment related costs are paid directly by the Assembly Commission, on behalf of each Member and are not charged against the annual Category 1 costs limit. These are referred to as Category 3 costs and include (paragraph 35 of the 2025 Determination refers):

- a) Employers' contributions to National Insurance;
- b) Employers' pension contributions, to the pension scheme approved by the Assembly Commission and capped at 10% of the gross salary of each member of staff;
- c) Statutory redundancy payments;
- d) Temporary work agency fees and charges associated with the engagement of temporary agency workers; and
- e) Employers' liability insurance.

4.9.2. Support staff are automatically enrolled in the pension scheme approved by the Assembly Commission, which is currently Nest. This is the Government's centrally provided pension solution. The Pay and Pensions team provide Members' staff with information on the scheme and write to them on their behalf once they are engaged on payroll. The team also undertakes the monthly administration required by Nest in relation to auto-enrolment and pays over the monthly contributions, both the employees (3%) and employers (10%) and undertakes the necessary administration on behalf of Member's with the Pensions Regulator.

4.9.3. Further information on the pension scheme for support staff is available in the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal.

# 5 Office Costs

## 5.1 Overview Office Costs

5.1.1. This section of the guidance gives an overview of the role of the MFS Team in paying claims due to Members and to detail the processes that must be followed to recover the costs incurred in opening and running a constituency office.

5.1.2. The Claims team offers support and advice to Members on what type of costs may be claimed and also assists Members to budget and ensure that the maximum allowances are not breached. Payments for claims are made by BACS weekly.

5.1.3. Costs incurred may be recovered by Members under the provisions of Part 1 of the 2025 Determination. While this section of the guidance will provide Members with an overview of the main points of the 2025 Determination, it does not replicate the full detail. Members are advised that this guidance should be read in conjunction with the full 2025 Determination, and not read in isolation.

5.1.4. For the avoidance of doubt, the purpose of the 2025 Determination is to reimburse Members for expenditure wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in carrying out their functions as a Member. Party activities are totally excluded from these arrangements, as are activities associated with election campaigns.

5.1.5. A Member's entitlement to recover costs associated with carrying out their functions as a Member commences on the date they give the Undertaking and sign the Roll of Membership and continues up to, and including the date they leave the Assembly.

5.1.6. After leaving, former Members can continue to recover costs associated with winding up their Assembly business for 3 months. These costs may be recovered as directed under [Leaving the Assembly](#) section of this guide.

5.1.7. On joining the Assembly Members may claim for a number of costs incurred in carrying out their functions. These are as follows:

### Constituency Office Costs

- Rent and Rates;
- Constituency office operating costs (COOC);
- Constituency office start up and maintenance costs (COSUM);

and

### Other Costs

- Security measures;
- Overnight accommodation costs
- Recall costs;
- Disability costs;
- Winding up costs (WUC).

5.1.8. Claims for the recovery of costs should be submitted supported by copies of original invoices or receipts. However, paragraph 40 of the 2025 Determination places a duty on Members to keep financial records, in order to explain how costs have been incurred and recovered.

5.1.9. It is important that claims are submitted using the appropriate form as the forms contain a number of important certifications. In the absence of Members making these certifications, claims cannot be paid. Each of the sections below state the correct form to use and all forms are accessible from the Finance Office section of the Members' portal.

5.1.10. For the information on how to submit claims and what makes good supporting evidence see [Submission Process](#) section of this Administration Guide.

## Declaration of Compliance

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5.1.11. Annually Members are required to make and submit an annual Declaration of Compliance (**Declaration of Compliance Form (MF12)**). Recovery of costs incurred in the subsequent year is not possible until the completed form is received by the MFS Claims team. This declaration includes confirmation of the number of days travelled to the Assembly and **must** be accompanied by a record of travel, which must detail the day of travel, the date and the reason for attendance at Parliament Buildings. See [Annual Declaration of Compliance](#) section for more details.

## Costs in relation to a Connected Person

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5.1.12. Members are not entitled to recover an expense in respect of any payment to a connected person. This is certified by each Member by way of completing the annual **Declaration of Compliance Form (MF12)**, and by a separate declaration on every claim form.

## Annual Self-Assessment – HMRC

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5.1.13. While costs claimed by Members each year are deemed to be 'business expenses' by HMRC, they are recorded on a substitute P11D form. This is issued to Members following the completion of each tax year. The Finance Office has no role in preparing the annual tax returns for Members; this is their individual responsibility. Members must use the information provided in the P11D to complete and submit an annual self-assessment, ensuring they comply with HMRC rules and regulations. Guidance can be found on the HMRC website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-assessment-northern-ireland-legislative-assembly-sa102mla>

## 5.2 Renting an Office

### Renting an Office - Overview

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5.2.1. On joining the Assembly, Members may wish to rent a property, in order to establish and run a constituency office. If they choose to do so, the associated costs may be recovered under the provisions of the 2025 Determination (paragraphs 5, 7 and 8 of the 2025 Determination refer).

5.2.2. Establishing a constituency office is a matter for each individual Member. The Assembly Commission has no role in selecting an office or negotiating the terms of a lease. The lease and the obligations placed on the Member as a tenant are entirely a matter of the Member; however, the costs associated with the lease may be recovered.

5.2.3. For the avoidance of doubt, offices leased and then funded under the provisions of the 2025 Determination must be used solely and exclusively in connection with the discharge of a Member's functions as a Member. An office **must** not be used for any other purpose, including by way of an example, commercial activities, council business or party political activities, including during an election period.

5.2.4. The amount of rent which may be recovered is capped annually and depends on a number of factors which are set out in the [Rent Payments](#) section of this guidance. If in doubt as to which limit applies Members should contact the Claims team. If the rental value of the lease is above the maximum amounts recoverable, payment of the excess will a matter for the Member.

5.2.5. Where the office is leased from a connected person, rent may not be recovered. However other operating costs may be recovered, as long as the payments are not made directly to the connected person. 'Connected person' is defined in paragraph 44 of the Determination.

5.2.6. The Determination does not place a limit on the number of leases a Member may hold, however, where a Member chooses to rent more than one office, the rents for each property are combined and the total must not exceed the maximum allowed. Where premises are shared with any other person(s), the Member can enter into a joint lease.

5.2.7. Rent and rates are only payable for the qualifying period of the lease, i.e. from the date of commencement to the date the lease expires or up to three months after a Member leaves the Assembly.

### Renting an Office – Eligibility Criteria

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5.2.8. For a Member to be able to recover the rent and rates payments for any leased property a number of further eligibility conditions must be met, including

- a) conditions of lease documentation; and
- b) the constituency office meeting signage conditions.

5.2.9. If there are any doubts regarding a lease or constituency office being compliant, the Claims team should be consulted before the lease is entered into.

5.2.10. In advance of payments being made, evidence of compliance with the eligibility criteria must be submitted to the Claims team. This includes a copy of the lease. It should be noted that the Claims team can only verify compliance with the criteria of the 2025 Determination. Legal advice on the specific terms of the lease may be sought and costs associated with such advice may be recovered from COOC.

5.2.11. If a Member has an interest in the lease and the Member has not disclosed this interest to the Claims team, rent and rates are not recoverable.

## Renting an Office – Lease documentation

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5.2.12. Every lease **must** contain the following:

- a) The name of both parties;
- b) The signature of both parties;
- c) The date the lease commences;
- d) The date the lease ends; (these dates determine the qualifying period of the lease); and
- e) A term that states the landlord is responsible for maintaining the office in a good state of repair.

5.2.13. In addition to the above, it is highly recommended that:

- a) the lease contains a provision for early termination. This is commonly provided through the inclusion of a break clause, which would assist Members to manage rent payments etc. during election periods. It is recommended that the clause entitles the Member to terminate the lease by giving notice of up to 3 months, which is the maximum period for which a former Member can recover rent after leaving the Assembly; and
- b) As public service providers and employers, Members have obligations under the Disability Act 1995 to consider what if any reasonable adjustments are required to make their service and workplace accessible. In selecting premises for a constituency office, Members should consider whether the premises are accessible to employees or members of the public who require access. For example, is there a lift in the office if it isn't located on the ground floor or, if the office is on the ground floor, are any awkward steps or stairs to the door. Costs of reasonable adjustments at the constituency office may be recovered under COOC or Disability Costs. More information can be found in [Disability Costs](#) section.

5.2.14. As noted above, rent and rates may only be recovered if the lease contains a clause to say that the landlord is responsible for maintaining the office in a good state of repair. It is recommended that **all** repairs and maintenance are the responsibility of the landlord.

5.2.15. If, however, a lease clause limits the landlord's responsibility to cover, for example, only structural repairs, then any remaining aspects of repairs and maintenance may be the responsibility of the Member, as expenditure incurred on such items may not be admissible under the terms of the 2025 Determination. It is recommended that Members contact the Claims team to discuss the conditions of the repair clause (s) prior to signing the final lease to ensure that it is fully compliant with the 2025 Determination.

5.2.16. If the lease does not comply with these requirements no rent or rates will be recoverable. Legal advice associated with the lease is recoverable under COOC.

## Renting an Office - Signage Conditions

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5.2.17. The requirements regarding signage are detailed in full at paragraph 8 of the 2025 Determination. It is imperative that Members ensure they are familiar and comply with the full requirements of this paragraph, as failure to do so will preclude any claims in respect of rent and rates for the office. Compliance is verified by way of a personal declaration made by each Member. Where an issue of non-compliance is identified after rent and rates have been in payment, full recovery will be sought for the entire period of non-compliance with the Determination. This could lead to a significant personal financial detriment for Members.

5.2.18. In order to recover rent and rates, following specific conditions must be met regarding signage.

- a) The sign **must** be displayed on the **exterior of the office**:
  - i) It **must** contain the **name of the Member**,
  - ii) It **must** contain the words “**Member of the Legislative Assembly**” or “**MLA**”,
  - iii) It **must** contain the words “**constituency office**” and
  - iv) It **must** contain the **Assembly blue flax logo**. A suitable copy of the Blue Flax Assembly Logo is available from the Claims team, along with guidance that can be forwarded to any sign maker. This is also available in the Finance Office section of the Members’ Portal.
- b) Where the office is shared with another Member, the conditions listed in points (i)-(iv) apply in respect of the other Member (s).
- c) The sign **may** also include:
  - v) the address of the office;
  - vi) the name or logo of a political party;
  - vii) where the office is shared with another person who is not a Member, such as an MP, the name of that person. This is taken to include any official titles;
  - viii) the telephone number and email address of the office and/or the Member (not a party email address).

5.2.19. Any additional information included in the sign, other than those detailed in the 2025 Determination, will render any claim for payment void and it will be returned to the Member unprocessed. No rent and rates costs may be recovered if any materials that encourage the public to vote for any candidate, or for any political party, are displayed so as to be visible from the outside of the constituency office.

5.2.20. When combined, the Assembly and Party logos must not be more than 20% of the size of sign. The method used to calculate the logo size is to measure the area from the top to the bottom of the **sign** (not logo) by the full width of the **logo**. This has been deemed the most reasonable approach to maintain consistency in calculating what percentage of the sign is covered by a logo. The Party logo must not be bigger than the Assembly logo.

5.2.21. Any reference to Party logo in these requirements is taken to mean any logo which has been registered with the Electoral Commission, excluding any that contain straplines, as these are not admissible.

5.2.22. Window graphics are allowable and may contain names, address, contact details (any email address must be an NI Assembly address), opening hours etc, but not anything that encourages the public to vote for any candidate or for any political party. Any additional office signage may only contain the name of the member, MLA and directional instructions, e.g. Joe Blogs MLA and an arrow pointing in the direction of the entry.

5.2.23. All Members must obtain prior approval from the Claims team before undertaking the production and installation of office signage, including window graphics, in order to establish if it is admissible. Therefore, for any new or amended sign a proof should be forwarded prior to completion. When submitting a claim for payment, a photograph of the final signage, in situ, must also be forwarded to the MFS team. This photograph must include the whole of the front of the building with any shutters raised.

5.2.24. For administration purposes, signage at the appointed constituency office must be in place within one month of the effective date of the lease.

5.2.25. The annual **Declaration of Compliance Form (MF12)** will ask Members to confirm that the signage remains compliant each year.

## Renting an Office - Rent Payments

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5.2.26. Once a compliant lease has been received and the Finance Office has received and approved photographic evidence of the sign, rent payments may be recovered.

5.2.27. The amount of rent that may be recovered depends on a number of factors, if in doubt, Members should contact the Claims team. The maximum amount recoverable for rent payments, effective from 1 October 2024 are:

- a) **Single Occupier: £10,000 per annum.**
- b) **Sharing with MP (s): £4,700 per annum.**
- c) **Sharing with Member(s): £7,100 per annum.**

5.2.28. The maximum recoverable rent is further reduced if the following conditions are met:

- a) If the property is owned by a connected person: no rent will be recoverable.
- b) If the property is owned by an associated person: 50% of the rent detailed above, will be recoverable.

5.2.29. Members should note that when sharing an office, the conditions of 'connected persons' and 'associated persons' apply to all persons involved in the sharing arrangement. A Member is regarded as sharing if the other person (s) is a member of the same party and the other person (s) is another Member, and/or an MP.

5.2.30. Where premises are in close proximity they may be considered as a shared office, if they are in the same building; owned by the same person and the person occupying the second property is covered by the definition given in paragraph above.

5.2.31. Separate charges for the rental of car parking spaces are not admissible from this category of costs. If they are incurred they may be admissible under COOC or, if required by way of reasonable adjustments, they may be admissible under Disability Costs.

5.2.32. Service Charges are not admissible under this category of costs. If a leasing agreement includes a separate provision for Service Charges, the Claims team will require specific details of what these charges relate to. Only those aspects of the Service Charge which can be categorised under the headings of “Constituency Office Operating Costs” will be payable. These must be claimed and will not be paid through rental payments. Any remaining aspects of the Service Charge will be the responsibility of the Member.

## Renting an Office - How to claim

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5.2.33. All payments for rent must be made directly to the landlord, or their agent, as directed by the Member. Rent payments are made either monthly or quarterly. It's highly recommended that scheduled quarterly payments are planned to correspond to calendar quarters: i.e. for 1 April, 1 July, 1 October and 1 January.

5.2.34. A **Rental Details Form (MF7)** should be completed fully and submitted to the Claims team, together with an original copy of the approved lease. A copy should be retained in the constituency office. Details on how long to retain records can be found in the **Retention of Records** of this guide. Attached to the form must be the contact details for the office and a photograph clearly showing the signage in situ. Please note that the details in this form will remain active until changes are received, in writing, from the Member. Payments will be set up to automatically be paid in accordance with the lease. Members do not have to request payment each period. However, it is the responsibility of Members to notify the Finance Office immediately should circumstances change.

## Changes to leases/Expiry of leases

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5.2.35. Sometimes there are changes required to leases or payment instructions. If changes arise, it is the Members responsibility to inform the Claims team promptly, especially with regards to changes in bank details or landlord. If a payment has been made in error, then the Member may become personally liable and the sanctions for the recoupment of costs, contained within the paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination may be applied.

5.2.36. The following list sets out examples of issues that Members may consider or actions to be undertaken with regard to leases. However should a Member require further assistance, the Claims team can advise:

- a) **Update Lease Payee Details** If a Member needs to update the bank details of the recipient of the rent payment, a new **Rental Details Form (MF7)** should be submitted to the Claims team.
- b) **Change of Landlord** If there is a change of landlord, for example, after the sale of the property, then Members are required to inform the Claims team immediately and submit a lease addendum and new **Rental Details Form (MF7)** as agreed with the new landlord.
- c) **Rent review** If there is a change to the annual lease value following a rent review, Members must inform the Claims team immediately, even if the Member is already recovering up to the maximum rental limit allowed, as it may impact the amount of rates that are recoverable. If the rent review forms part of clauses of the current lease, then Members can submit an addendum to the lease to amend the relevant paragraphs. Any addendum to the original lease must be signed by other parties to the agreement and witnessed appropriately. If no such clause exists in the lease, it is preferable that a new lease is submitted, however an agreed, signed copy of an addendum will also be accepted.

- d) **Lease Expiry** When a lease expires, rent and rates payments may continue on the basis of the expired lease agreement, as long as both parties agree and all conditions remain unchanged (including signage). Members must inform the Finance Office at the earliest opportunity if this is the case, while they negotiate or renew the lease. Any agreement to continue with the terms of an expired lease, should be notified in writing and be signed by both parties.

5.2.37. Where an addendum is submitted, to ensure its validity and that it meets the necessary evidence of compliance with the Determination, the Member must ensure that it is:

- a) **Written form** The addendum must be in writing. It should clearly state the relevant clause(s) and change (for example, the new landlord's name and contact details) and be attached to the original lease.
- b) **Signatures** As with the lease, both parties (tenant and new landlord) must sign and date the addendum
- c) **Clarity and Specificity** The addendum should be clear and unambiguous, specifying the effective date of the change and any implications for any responsibilities contained in the original lease, if applicable.

## 5.3 Rates

5.3.1. Where the rent for a constituency office is recoverable in full, the amount of rates demanded by Land and Property Services (LPS) may be recovered in full. Where the rental payments due under the lease exceed the maximum rental cost recoverable for that year, then the maximum rates recoverable, will be determined using the following formula:

$$\text{Rental payments due under the lease} = \frac{\text{Rates charge for the office} \times \text{Maximum expense recoverable}}{\text{Rental payments due under the lease}}$$

*Rental payments due under the lease*

5.3.2. Payments to LPS for annual rates charges are processed in the same manner as other COOC claims. Therefore, when the invoice is received, it should be forwarded to the Claims team, with a **Direct Payment Form (MF4)** attached. The Claims team will only process rates up to the maximum amount recoverable. Any amount in excess of this will be the responsibility of the Member. Details on how to claim are covered in the [Methods of claiming - Direct Payment](#) section of this Administration Guide.

## 5.4 Constituency Office Start-Up and Maintenance Costs (COSUM)

5.4.1. In order to off-set some of the additional costs of setting up a constituency office, refurbishing or maintaining an established one (including equipment), Members can recover up to **£4,000 per mandate**.

5.4.2. Recoverable costs include (without limitation):

- a) purchasing and refurbishing furniture and equipment;
- b) office maintenance costs, i.e. those not covered by the terms of the lease;
- c) implementing health and safety measures;
- d) reasonable adjustments to the constituency office for persons with a disability that are not covered under the terms of the lease;
- e) security measures;
- f) fire protection measures;
- g) seeking planning permission for, or the design and installation of, office signage, including window graphics; and
- h) any other costs the Assembly Commission may specify.

5.4.3. In order to make a claim, approval must be sought in advance from the Claims team using a **Pre-Approval Request Form (MF8)**. Only once approval has been granted can the Member incur the cost.

5.4.4. The Claims team will inform Members if approval for the expenditure has been granted by issuing a **Pre-Approval Decision Form (MF9)**.

5.4.5. Following receipt of an affirmative **Pre-Approval Decision Form (MF9)** Members may incur the cost. Once Members receive the invoice, payment should be requested by means of submitting a **Direct Payment Form (MF4)**, or **Reimbursement Form (MF5)**. A copy of the approval to incur the expenditure must also be attached to the claim form and it should be annotated 'COSUM'. Details on how to claim are covered in the [Methods of claiming - Direct Payment](#) section of this guide

5.4.6. If prior approval is not sought, payment for the costs incurred will not be made from the category. However, if in exceptional circumstances, the cost is admissible under COOC, and sufficient budget remains, Members can submit it for payment under this category instead.

5.4.7. While Members are not bound by specific public procurement requirements the Ten Principles require Members to ensure that any expenditure incurred provides value for money (Principle 8).

## 5.5 Constituency Office Operating Costs (COOC)

### Running a Constituency Office

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5.5.1. COOC are provided under paragraph 10 of the 2025 Determination and are the ongoing, day to day operating costs that may be incurred for running a constituency office, except for rent and rates. A member is entitled to recover any admissible cost that has actually been incurred, in carrying out their functions as a Member, and has not been recovered from any other person, nor reimbursed to the Member by any other person.

5.5.2. Where an office is shared the costs must be apportioned equally amongst all of those sharing. Members can only recover COOC which relate to themselves. A sharing agreement will be required for each person sharing (**Sharing Accommodation Notification MF3**). This form also allows one party to the shared office to sign for costs incurred on behalf of the other(s).

5.5.3. Any costs claimed in relation to any party political activity such as political campaigning, fund raising, party membership or any other political activity are not admissible under the provisions of the 2025 Determination and will not be processed for payment.

5.5.4. The maximum amount of COOC recoverable from 1 April 2026 is **£8,440** per annum. Recoverable costs may include, but are not limited to: –

- a) utility, telephone/mobile phone and internet charges. This includes electricity, gas, oil, water charges, waste disposal, including shredding and recycling costs. This also includes all telecommunication costs;
- b) legal costs associated with the lease of the constituency office;
- c) office furniture, office stationery, office equipment, printer and associated maintenance costs;
- d) IT consumables, software packages including casework software, anti-virus software, and data storage devices or cloud based accounts;
- e) office cleaning, including window cleaning and supplies;
- f) registration with the Information Commissioner's Office. This is not necessary for all offices. A check should be made for necessity prior to requesting payment;
- g) signage, including the cost of design and installation of the sign well as any graphics for the windows;
- h) insurance. Members may wish to note that public liability and employers' liability insurance are purchased centrally by the Assembly Commission. See [Insurance](#) section for more information;
- i) health and safety measures. Further information on health and safety is available from the Members Portal in a document called [Think about Health and Safety - Supporting MLAs in their work](#) .
- j) reasonable adjustments to the constituency office for persons with a disability that are not covered under the terms of the lease;
- k) security measures;
- l) fire protection measures. For example the cost of fire detecting equipment, training in fighting equipment use / fire equipment maintenance;

- m) statutory charges, water rates, or other levies;
- n) hiring or renting rooms situated in the member's constituency for the purposes of holding satellite surgeries;
- o) advertising, which is limited to factual information relating to contact details and times of opening for the constituency office or in relation to the holding of satellite constituency surgeries;
- p) purchase of a television licence solely for the constituency office;
- q) newspapers and periodicals (either printed or electronic); and
- r) interpretation and similar costs. For example engaging an interpreter for a language other than English or engaging a sign language interpreter.

5.5.5. It is recognised that in certain circumstances Members may benefit from utilising the Assembly Commission's centrally procured contracts for certain goods or services. Using such contracts will often ensure value for money can be achieved. If a Member wishes to avail of such contracts, it should be noted that the resulting costs are chargeable against the Member's allowances, not the Assembly Commission. These contracts include:

- a) **ordering and supply of stationery and IT consumables.** Enquiries about what products are available and how to use these services should be addressed to the Office Resources team, which is located in Room B34b in Parliament Buildings. Any goods ordered using this service will be recharged to the Members' COOC monthly and will be a charge against the maximum allowance.
- b) **procuring a leased Managed Print Service (MPS).** The Assembly has procured a MPS contract for Parliament Buildings. As part of this contract, if a Member requires a new printer at the constituency office, there is the option to procure the service from this contract. Any printer obtained via the terms of this contract will be a direct contract between the provider and the Member. Members will be invoiced directly with two invoices: one for rental of the device and software, and another for use charges. All costs are recoverable under COOC and instructions to make direct payments to the supplier should be requested using a Direct Payment Form (MF4) attaching the invoices. Further information and enquiries about what products are available and how to use these services can be found on IT Section of Members' Portal [Constituency Office Printer Guidance](#).

## 5.6 Security Measures

5.6.1. Under the provisions of paragraph 11 of the 2025 Determination Members are entitled to the recover costs of security measures at constituency offices and a Member's private dwelling. This could be for the installation of new measures, the replacement of obsolete measures, or the upgrade of existing measures. Members may also recover the costs of providing personal security devices, including lone working devices for themselves or the staff they employ.

5.6.2. The maximum amount recoverable is **£4,000 per mandate**.

5.6.3. Examples of the costs which may be recovered include, but are not limited to: -

- a) Purchase and installation of security cameras, security alarms, shutters, panic buttons, or door entry systems;
- b) Security Camera Cloud storage;

- c) Lone Working Devices (LWD) (or applications that provide this functionality). These can be for Member's use or for staff who are employed under the terms of the 2025 Determination; and
- d) LWD Support Subscriptions.

5.6.4. In order to recover the costs of security measures, approval must be sought in advance from the Claims team using **Pre-Approval Request Form (MF8)**. Only once approval has been granted can the Member incur the cost.

5.6.5. The Claims team will inform Members if approval for the expenditure has been granted by issuing a **Pre-Approval Decision Form (MF9)**.

5.6.6. Once an affirmative **Pre-Approval Decision Form (MF9)** has been received, Members may proceed arrange for the goods to be purchased and installed or the service to be delivered. On receipt of the invoice, payment should be requested by means of submitting a **Direct Payment Form (MF4)**, or **Reimbursement Form (MF5)**. A copy of the approval to incur the expenditure must also be attached to the claim form and it should be annotated 'Security Measures'. Details on how to claim for are covered in the [Methods of claiming - Direct Payment](#) section of this Administration Guide.

5.6.7. If prior approval is not sought, payment for the costs incurred will not be made under this category of cost. However, in exceptional circumstances, where the costs are deemed admissible under COOC, and if there is sufficient budget remaining, the costs can be recovered under that category instead. It is important to note that should recovery be sought under COOC, it only covers security measures for constituency offices, not a Member's private dwelling.

5.6.8. While Members are not bound by specific public procurement requirements the Ten Principles require Members to ensure that any expenditure incurred provides value for money (Principle 8).

5.6.9. Members can liaise directly with PSNI regarding the provision of personal security/safety and/or crime prevention advice. More information on the security services available to Members can be accessed through the [Members Portal: Usher Services](#).

## 5.7 Overnight Accommodation

5.7.1. Where it is necessary for a Member to undertake Parliamentary travel related to their duties as a Member, this is generally arranged, booked and paid for directly by the Assembly Commission. A Member may incur incidental travel costs, such as taxi fares and car parking, whilst undertaking this Parliamentary business and these are recoverable under the Parliamentary Travel Scheme through the submission of expense claims. See Section Incidental Costs of Parliamentary Travel for more details.

5.7.2. There may be occasions, however, where a Member needs to avail of overnight accommodation following attendance of a late sitting of the Assembly. In these situations, the cost may be recovered under Paragraph 12 of the 2025 Determination.

5.7.3. In order to avail of this provision, the Member must be present at a sitting which continues beyond 10:00pm and the Member must stay in the overnight accommodation following the end of the sitting.

5.7.4. The Assembly Commission specifies the maximum daily rate for such accommodation, which is currently £140 for an overnight stay, on a bed and breakfast basis. Accommodation must be within 10 miles of Parliament Buildings.

5.7.5. Reasonable costs of car-parking or taxi costs related to the stay may also be recovered.

## How to book

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5.7.6. If a Member is aware in advance of the need for a hotel booking, bookings should be made via the Assembly Commission's centralised Travel team, based on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor in Parliament Buildings. The service is operated daily from 9am to 5 pm. Bookings arranged by the Travel team will be paid directly by the Assembly Commission. To avail of this service, please contact the Travel team directly on extension 21017 within Parliament Buildings, or (028 90 521017) from elsewhere.

5.7.7. If a booking is required outside of office hours, Members will be required to make the booking directly with a suitable hotel. When making a booking, a Member may wish to enquire whether the hotel has a prior arrangement to bill the Assembly directly. If the hotel does not offer this facility, a Member should pay the cost of the hotel and re-claim the cost from the Claims team using **Reimbursement Form (MF5)**.

5.7.8. A Member who books a hotel room independently and then seeks to recover the costs will only be reimbursed the actual cost incurred, up to a maximum of £140 per night, only if all of the eligibility criteria are met.

5.7.9. If in exceptional circumstances, Members are unable to source a hotel within these limits, the full cost of the overnight accommodation will only be recoverable if the member can provide evidence to show why costs exceeded the daily limit.

5.7.10. For the avoidance of doubt, overnight accommodation is only recoverable where all of the eligibility criteria are met.

## 5.8 Petty Cash

5.8.1. To enable low cost day to day items to be paid for, e.g. tea/ coffee, postage stamps, etc., Members may choose to operate a petty cash system. Prior to any purchases being made, the Member will have to apply for a cash float, up to a maximum of **£75.00** using **FORM MF19**. In order to top up the float, Members must submit a monthly claim by completing and submitting **Petty Cash Form (MF20)**, to which receipts **must** be attached. It should be noted that these costs will not be analysed and the Member will be responsible for identifying those items that cannot be recovered as a business expense for tax purposes. Where any claim is deemed inadmissible, the Member will be responsible for topping up the float.

5.8.2. When a Member leaves the Assembly, the full float will need to be accounted for in terms of final receipts and remaining cash float. Members should complete the relevant section of their final **MF20 form** to indicate that it is their last claim and that they are going to make the repayment of the petty cash. Repayments can be made directly to the Assembly Commission bank account or by cheque. Members should contact the Claims team for payment details. Any shortfall in petty cash will be deducted from any outstanding payments payable to the Member.

## 5.9 Recall Costs

5.9.1. If the Assembly is recalled during recess, costs incurred by a Member which are wholly and necessarily attributable for attendance at the Assembly may be recovered. Members are advised to contact the Claims team in advance of submitting a claim to ensure costs are admissible. Once confirmation has been received that the costs are recoverable, Members should submit their claims using the **Recall Costs Form (MF23)**.

## 5.10 Disability Costs

### Overview

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5.10.1. This section explains the financial support available to Members if they wish to recover the costs associated with a disability they, or a member of staff may have, or the costs incurred in making reasonable adjustments at their constituency office in order to fulfil obligations under Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995.

5.10.2. The DDA 1995 makes it unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in connection with the provision of goods, facilities and services. Part III of the DDA 1995 places a number statutory duties on businesses and organisations referred to collectively as 'service providers'. Members, in their provision of services to the public, are deemed to be a service provider. These DDA 1995 duties extend to every aspect of the services and facilities provided by the Member, who must therefore, make 'reasonable adjustments' to their policies and practices so that they do not place persons with a disability at particular disadvantage.

5.10.3. Members must also comply in their duties as employers to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that, as far as is reasonable, a disabled worker has the same access to everything involved in doing and retaining a job as a non-disabled person.

### What can be claimed?

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5.10.4. Paragraph 14 of the 2025 Determination provides for the recovery of disability costs, where a disability cost is a cost incurred by the Member which is –

- a) Wholly and necessarily attributable to a disability the Member has, or
- b) incurred in making reasonable adjustments to the Member's constituency office, which are not covered under the terms of the lease for that office, to accommodate a disabled member of staff or to facilitate access for disabled members of the public.

5.10.5. In this paragraph, "disability" has the same meaning as in the DDA1995.

5.10.6. There is no prescribed list for what may constitute a reasonable adjustment. All potential reasonable adjustments will be considered and evaluated on a case by case basis. The type of adjustments which may be deemed as reasonable include:

- a) making reasonable adjustments to the office layout or office premises to accommodate a disabled member of staff and/or facilitating access for disabled members of the public;
- b) employing additional members of support staff;
- c) providing IT and other specialist equipment for disabled persons; or

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

## Additional services available to Members

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5.10.7. As employers, Members are responsible for making the decision about what adjustments are reasonable for staff. They can seek advice from the HR Office on recruitment and employment considerations and also gain access to appropriate Occupation Health Services through the Assembly Commission's central contract, if a workplace assessment is required. Members should contact the HR Office directly to discuss referrals using the following email address: [hrrservicestomembers@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:hrrservicestomembers@niassembly.gov.uk)

5.10.8. Members should note that referrals to Occupational Health Services are not funded centrally. The contract provider will issue an invoice directly to the Member for the services rendered. This can be recovered under Category 2 costs, through submission of either the **Direct Payments (MF4)** or **Reimbursements (MF5)** forms.

## Reasonable adjustments to constituency office

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5.10.9. To recognise that all Members have a responsibility to ensure that constituency office space is accessible for people with disabilities, paragraph 7 (8) of the 2025 Determination recommends that Members should ensure premises are accessible when selecting a constituency office.

5.10.10. Should reasonable adjustments be identified and required, Members should engage with the landlord, before signing any lease, to confirm that the accommodation is suitable for access, and that the required adjustments will be covered under the terms of the lease.

5.10.11. However, in recognition that circumstances may arise where this is not possible and additional costs, not covered within the quantum of COOC or COSUM are incurred, then the costs for reasonable adjustments at the constituency office may now be recovered under Disability Costs provision.

5.10.12. Where the adjustment is relatively low cost and their effectiveness in supporting the person can be assessed with relative ease, the Finance Office will not seek supporting evidence. Examples might include minor modifications to the office setting, including changes in lighting, signage, the addition of a portable wheelchair ramp, the purchase of software, or ergonomic equipment.

5.10.13. Where the adjustment is of a higher value or relates to an ongoing cost, additional supporting evidence in respect of the disability cost may be required. If this is the case, the Finance Office will contact the Member directly to discuss the issue more fully. In such circumstances it may be advisable to undertake a workplace assessment or make a referral to a medical, or occupational health professional, to obtain recommendations as to which adjustments are required. Examples might include the need for higher value equipment. The cost of the assessment can be claimed under this Disability Costs.

5.10.14. As with all purchases, Members should be able to demonstrate that they have carried out due diligence to ensure value for money, for example, by seeking and comparing quotes from different suppliers. For expenditures of a higher value it is advised that Members clearly define their requirements and obtain at least three quotes for each purchase decision. These quotations should accompany the claim when submitted for payment. The Finance Office will assess such claims, giving regard to current guidance and/or the treatment of any similar claims. It is acknowledged that in some instances the cheapest option will not necessarily be the most cost-effective, or reasonable option when taken together with other factors

## Reasonable adjustments for a disability the Member has

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5.10.15. Where a Member wishes to recover disability costs for a disability they have, the 2025 Determination requires that the Member must provide satisfactory evidence from an approved qualified medical practitioner or an approved qualified occupational health practitioner as to the nature of the disability. The practitioner should confirm that as a result of the disability, the Member requires additional resources for the performance of their functions as a Member, and that the costs of additional resources are wholly and necessarily attributable to the disability the Member has.

5.10.16. It is important to note that where the Member is employing an additional member of staff under Disability costs, all payments must be made through the central payroll bureau operated by the Assembly Commission. While the full requirements of Part 3 of the 2025 Determination, in relation to support staff costs, do not apply, Members should be mindful of any reputational risk that may arise if they choose not to adopt best practice for recruitment, or not to apply the prescribed salary scales.

## How to claim

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5.10.17. As part of completing the **Member's Information Form (N1)** when they join the Assembly, Members are asked to declare any disability they may have. Once the form is complete the HR Office will contact the individual Member to discuss what additional support and assistance the Member may require.

5.10.18. If in addition to the support offered by the HR Office, a Member wishes to recover costs associated with their disability, or would like to make reasonable adjustment to their constituency office, a **Disability Costs Form (MF13)** must be completed and forwarded to the Claims team.

5.10.19. A member of the Claims team will then contact the Member directly to discuss the application and advise the Member on the next steps. Members may be required to submit further evidence depending on the reasonable adjustment requested. Once approval has been granted, the Member will be informed. Only following receipt of approval can the Member incur the cost.

5.10.20. Any claims for equipment purchased will be processed by the Claims team and should be made using either the **Direct Payment Form (MF4)** or **Reimbursement Form (MF5)** claim forms, annotating that it is being claimed under the Disability Costs category of expenditure.

5.10.21. Where the Disability cost application is to cover the costs of additional staffing requirements, once the application has been approved to commence the salary payments a copy of an agreed contract and **New Support Staff details Form (A1)** should be completed and forwarded to the Pay and Pensions team.

## 6 Insurance

6.1.1. The Assembly Commission provides several insurance products for Members. These are purchased centrally and include:

- a) Employer's Liability Insurance;
- b) Public Liability Insurance;
- c) Employment Legal Expenses Insurance; and
- d) Travel Insurance.

6.1.2. These products are provided to Members to cover activities incurred in connection with the Member's exercise of functions as a Member. Activities directly relating to the promotion or membership of any political party are excluded.

6.1.3. Members are responsible for arranging their own constituency office contents and buildings insurance. When arranging the insurance, Members should take care to avoid any unnecessary duplication of cover.

### Employer's Liability Insurance

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6.1.4. As Members are employers, the employer's liability insurance covers compensation costs, legal fees and damages related to work related illness or injury incurred by support staff (employees). Under the wider Assembly Commission policy, the indemnity limit is £20,000,000 and it covers staff working in the office or Parliament Buildings, staff working from home and work experience students.

6.1.5. Should a Member suspect that an incident has occurred which may give rise to an insurance claim, they must contact the Finance Office as soon as possible. Under the reporting arrangements of the policy, Members should not contact either the broker or insurance provider directly.

6.1.6. The Finance Office will provide a certificate of Employer's Liability Insurance for Members to display in their office.

### Public Liability Insurance

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6.1.7. The Public Liability insurance covers compensation costs, legal fees and damages in relation to accidents and injuries to members of the public arising from constituency office activities. The wider Assembly Commission policy provides an indemnity limit of £20,000,000.

6.1.8. Should a Member suspect that an incident has occurred which may give rise to an insurance claim, they must contact the Finance Office as soon as possible. Under the reporting arrangements of the policy, Members should not contact either the broker or insurance provider directly.

### Employment Legal Expenses Insurance

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6.1.9. This is a specialist insurance policy which covers compensation costs and legal expenses arising from employment disputes with support staff. The current policy has an indemnity limit of £250,000.

6.1.10. This policy responds to unfair, wrongful or constructive dismissal claims, whistle-blowing claims and a portfolio of other employment related issues. It provides access to a legal advice helpline, an online employment law guide and template documents which can supplement the guidance available from the HR Office. This policy is for Members only and the administration required to invoke the policy is the responsibility of each Member, i.e. it is up to each member to report any claim made against them directly with the insurance company or to use the helpline services directly should they need to make a decision in relation to a certain HR issue.

6.1.11. Claims are not handled by either the Finance, or HR Offices, however, more information on the policy and how to access it can be obtained by the MFS team. It is recommended Members contact the MFS team as early as possible in the event any issues, or concerns arise concerning support staff.

6.1.12. Any additional specialist legal advice on more complex employment issues is a matter for each individual Member.

## Travel Insurance

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6.1.13. This central insurance covers medical and emergency travel costs for Members, their staff and accompanying spouse, partner and/or children. The level of indemnity is unlimited.

6.1.14. The cover applies to “Parliamentary and Constituency activities related to and consequent upon membership of the Northern Ireland Assembly”.

6.1.15. Members are provided contact details when they book travel through the central Assembly Commission’s Travel team.

## Buildings Insurance

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6.2 Members are responsible for arranging insurance to cover the cost to repair damage or rebuild the structure of the constituency office building. Typically these policies provide cover for damage caused by events like fires, storms and floods.

6.3 This type of insurance is normally arranged by landlords and recharged to tenants. Members are encouraged to check their lease arrangements or engage with the landlord to ensure suitable cover is in place.

6.4 The cost of premiums is an admissible cost under COOC.

## Contents Insurance

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6.5 Members are responsible for arranging insurance to cover items in constituency offices against damage, destruction or theft.

6.6 NI Assembly Commission provided IT equipment does not require insurance.

6.7 The costs of premiums is an admissible cost under COOC.

# 7 Leaving the Assembly

## 7.1 Overview

7.1.1. It is recognised that Members may leave the Assembly for a variety of reasons and this section of the Administration guide has been prepared to cover common circumstances which occur during the course of a mandate. It is important to note that different arrangements exist if a Member is leaving prior to, or following an Assembly Election. As such, separate guidance for elections is published by the Assembly Commission for each election period.

7.1.2. Under the provisions of the 2025 Determination, when a Member leaves the Assembly they may recover costs associated with winding up their Assembly business, for a period of up to three months, beginning with the day on which they cease to be a Member. For administration purposes only, this is referred to as the 'winding up period'. Winding up refers to the process of concluding Assembly business and this guidance provides information on what financial support is available to former Members during this period.

7.1.3. A Member has a maximum of three months in which to wind up their Assembly business. Where Members want to wind up their Assembly business within a shorter time-frame, they should advise the Finance Office at the earliest opportunity.

7.1.4. The guidance outlines the key information relevant to a Member during this period and details the actions that must be completed in respect of the following areas:

- a) Contact with the Finance Office;
- b) Members' individual salaries and pensions;
- c) Travel Allowances;
- d) Resettlement Allowance (if applicable);
- e) Ill Health Retirement Allowance (if applicable);
- f) Winding Up Costs;
- g) Support Staff Costs; and
- h) Disability Costs

7.1.5. There is a checklist in Annex 7.1 which summarises the actions that must be completed.

7.1.6. For the avoidance of doubt the purpose of financial support provided to former Members is to reimburse them for costs wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in carrying out those Assembly functions undertaken to wind up their Assembly business. As with all other financial support, party political activities or activities undertaken by former Members relating to new career opportunities are totally excluded from these arrangements.

7.1.7. There are a number of references throughout this guidance document to recovery of overpaid amounts. Paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination provides for the recoupment of overpaid amounts from any future amounts to be paid to current and former Members, including salary or Resettlement Payments. Should a former Member not have any outstanding amounts owing to them from which a recovery could be made, they must reimburse the outstanding amount in full to the Assembly Commission.

7.1.8. Failure to make such payments will result in the initiation of legal proceedings to recover the amount in full.

## 7.2 Arrange a Winding Up Meeting

7.2.1. In all situations it is recommended that Members contact the Finance Office at the earliest opportunity to discuss their individual requirements when leaving the Assembly. Any discussions will be handled in the strictest of confidence.

7.2.2. Where a Member is leaving but has not contacted the Finance Office, a member of the MFS team will undertake to arrange a 'Winding up Meeting' with the Member as soon as possible. Attendance at the meeting will ensure that all administrative processes are correctly followed. It is imperative that Members and their staff are familiar with the implications of a Member's resignation and that they are aware of what actions must be taken.

## 7.3 Payment of Salaries and Pensions

7.3.1. Members' salaries are paid on a pro-rata basis up to and including the date of resignation. In line with normal pay policy the salary will be paid into the nominated bank account automatically three working days prior to the calendar month end. Therefore, if a Member's resignation is not received prior to payroll being processed and submitted to the banking system an overpayment may occur. In accordance with paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination recoupment will be sought.

7.3.2. It is recognised that Members may resign to take up other elected roles and offices. A number of specific arrangements exist depending on the role that is to be undertaken. It is recommended that Members contact the Finance Office directly to discuss their individual circumstances.

7.3.3. Under the provisions of the AMPS Members' pension is not payable until the age of 65 or State Pension Age, whichever is later. On leaving the Assembly uncrystallised pension benefits are deferred, until a Member becomes eligible to receive them. The Pay and Pensions team will notify the pension administrators of the Members' resignation and the administrators will contact the Member directly to confirm the deferred benefits accrued, and to outline what happens next. Should a Member be eligible for early retirement, they can contact the pension administrators to discuss their pension options.

## 7.4 Travel Allowances

7.4.1. Travel allowances are payable under two headings as detailed in the [Members' Allowances](#) section of the Administration guide:-

- a) Annual Constituency Travel Allowance (CTA); and
- b) Annual Assembly Travel Allowance (ATA).

7.4.2. Both allowances are paid monthly up to and including the date of resignation. Where resignation occurs part way through a month the monthly allowance due will be calculated on a pro-rata basis. If the resignation is notified after payroll processing has taken place for the month there will be an overpayment and recoupment will be sought in accordance with paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination

7.4.3. It is also important to note that under the provisions of the 2025 Determination, the payment of ATA is dependent on a minimum number of days attendance at Parliament Buildings being achieved, currently 72 or more days a year. The minimum number of days required for attendance will be calculated on a pro-rata basis up to, and including the date of resignation and communicated to the Member.

7.4.4. Following resignation, Members will be required to complete a **Declaration of Compliance Form (MF12)**. While this form is primarily to certify that Members have complied with all aspects of the Determination it also provides Members with the opportunity to declare if they have achieved the minimum attendance required for this allowance. If not, they must declare how many days they have actually attended. Members should complete this declaration and return it to the Finance Office along with supporting evidence of attendance. See section [Members' Allowances](#) for information about supporting evidence.

7.4.5. Where a Member declares that their number of days attended is less than the minimum required, recovery of 1% of the allowance will be sought for each day less than the minimum. Any balancing amount of allowance payable will be processed in the final salary payment through payroll. Where an overpayment has occurred recoupment will be sought in accordance with paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination.

## 7.5 Resettlement Allowance

7.5.1. Entitlement to a payment of Resettlement Allowance only occurs if a Member chooses not to stand, or is not returned, at an Assembly Election. Therefore where a Member resigns during a mandate for any reason other than as a result of an Assembly Election, then the Resettlement Allowance is **not** payable.

7.5.2. Resettlement allowance is covered in detail in the election guidance that is issued by the Finance Office during each election period. However, it is also covered here, for completeness.

7.5.3. Resettlement Allowance payments, when due will be paid, as long as the specific requirements of the 2025 Determination are met. The conditions under which a Resettlement Allowance payment will be made are set out at paragraph 20 of the 2025 Determination, which states that:

- (1) *A person is entitled to a resettlement allowance if the person was a member immediately before dissolution of the Assembly and—*
  - (a) *the person does not stand at the subsequent election, or*
  - (b) *the person does stand, but is not returned as a member.*
- (2) *The resettlement allowance is one month's salary (see sub-paragraph (3)) for each completed year of service, subject to a maximum of six months' salary.*
- (3) *The salary referred to in sub-paragraph (2) is the salary a member is entitled to by virtue of having the role of a member only, as set out in Table 1 of the 2016 Determination, calculated at the date of dissolution of the Assembly.*

- (4) *Before receiving the resettlement allowance, the person must make all arrangements necessary to wind-up the person's affairs as a member, including—*
  - (a) *issuing redundancy notices to staff,*
  - (b) *repaying any outstanding debts owing to the Commission,*
  - (c) *submitting all claims for recovery of costs to the Commission, and*
  - (d) *making any other arrangements identified by the Commission.*
- (5) *The resettlement allowance is not payable to the personal representatives of a deceased member.*
- (6) *A member is not entitled to both an ill-health retirement allowance and a resettlement allowance.*

For the purpose of the calculation, the salary used will be the salary payable at the date of dissolution.

7.5.4. Paragraph 20 (4) of the 2025 Determination requires that the financial affairs of Members, including submitting all claims for costs incurred and meeting all statutory and contractual requirements in relation to staff, are brought to a close prior to any Resettlement Allowance being paid. Therefore, the Resettlement Allowance amounts due will be paid by the Finance Office through the payroll system only on completion of the final Winding up costs (WUC) claim form and accompanying **Declaration of Completion of Winding up (MF15)**.

7.5.5. Under current legislation, the maximum amount payable is under the £30,000 tax threshold, as set by HMRC, so Resettlement Allowance payments are made tax free.

7.5.6. Any queries on salaries or Resettlement Allowance payments should be addressed to Pay and Pensions Team by emailing: [payteam@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:payteam@niassembly.gov.uk).

## 7.6 III – Health Retirement Allowance

7.6.1. If, a Member's resignation from the Assembly during a mandate is due to ill-health, under the provisions of paragraph 21 of the 2025 Determination they may be entitled to an Ill-Health Retirement Allowance.

7.6.2. In order to qualify for Ill-Health Retirement Allowance paragraph 21 (1) of the 2025 Determination sets out a number of additional requirements that must be met.

- a) The member must resign as a Member on the grounds of ill-health,
- b) The Member's ill-health must prevent the Member from adequately performing functions as a Member,
- c) There must be satisfactory evidence of these matters from a medical practitioner approved by the Assembly Commission; and
- d) The Member must not intend to seek re-election to the Assembly.

7.6.3. All of these conditions must be met in order to be eligible for Ill-Health Retirement Allowance.

7.6.4. This allowance must be applied for; it is not paid automatically. In order to make an application for this allowance, the Member must write to the Assembly Commission ensuring that all of the criteria in paragraph 21 of the 2025 Determination are met. If all of the conditions are met the Clerk/ Chief Executive will approve the application and the allowance will be paid to the Member as part of the next monthly payroll cycle.

7.6.5. The allowance payable is one month's salary for each completed year of service, subject to a maximum of six months salary.

7.6.6. Like Resettlement Allowance, a payment for Ill- Health Allowance will only be paid once the final **Declaration of Completion of Winding up Form (MF15)** is received by the Finance Office.

## 7.7 Winding Up Costs

7.7.1. A former Member can continue to recover constituency office costs, including Rent, Rates, COOC, and COSUM, Staffing Costs and Disability Costs during the winding up period in order to support the winding up of Assembly business. The following sections sets out what these costs are and the maximum amounts that may be recovered.

7.7.2. The annual maximum amounts of allowances will be pro-rated to the end of the winding up period. The maximum amounts recoverable during the winding up period will be notified to Members in writing, along with a budget expenditure report, providing a projection of WUC, including a breakdown of committed costs and the projected balance for the three month winding up period, on the understanding that the commitments for rent and rates will remain at pre-winding up figures.

7.7.3. Members are advised to use the report to monitor their year-to-date spending against maximum recoverable amounts, to prevent any overspending and to keep on top of administrating claims. All claims should be submitted promptly. Full details will be discussed in the Winding up Meeting.

## 7.8 Constituency Office Costs

7.8.1. A former member may recover any office costs during the winding up period which remain necessary for the conclusion of their Assembly business, including any contractual liabilities, such as office rent, utility bills and equipment rental payments, the costs, including removals, of leaving any office or accommodation funded under the 2025 Determination.

7.8.2. The financial support must be claimed, it is not paid automatically. Invoices may still be submitted in the normal manner for payment for either **Direct Payment (MF4)** to suppliers or by way of **Reimbursement (MF5)** to the former Member.

7.8.3. For administration purposes only former Members have a further two months, following the end of the winding up period, during which all final claims in respect of the winding up period must be submitted.

7.8.4. It may be helpful to note that any office equipment purchased through COOC or COSUM remains the property of the Member after they leave the Assembly. Therefore, it can be used in the constituency office to assist with winding up the Assembly business.

7.8.5. Where an overpayment of constituency office costs occurs, recoupment will be sought under the provisions of paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination.

## Rent and Rates

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7.8.6. Rent and rates may continue to be recovered for a period of up to three months after a Member leaves the Assembly. During this period of winding up, constituency offices can only be used by former Members in association with the winding up of Assembly business and must not be used by any other Member, former Member or support staff employed by another person.

7.8.7. It is recommended that Members review the terms of their lease at the earliest opportunity, to ensure that the contractual obligations regarding notice periods, dilapidation costs etc. are fully met. It is the Members responsibility to review their lease and ensure the correct notice period is given to the landlord in a timely manner. Any rent due as a result of failing to give proper notice is a matter for the individual once the winding up period concludes.

7.8.8. As soon as practicable after leaving, former Members should notify the Finance Office of the date by which they intend to vacate their constituency office. This will help ensure the correct amount of rent is paid. If an overpayment has occurred, the former Member will be notified.

7.8.9. If an incoming Member wishes to rent the same office as the former Member they are able to do so. However, it is important to note that both the incoming Member and former Member cannot use the same office and claim rent for the same period. If the former Member is using it for winding up purposes and continuing to claim rent and rates, then the co-opted Member must wait and commence the lease at a future date. The office must not be used for any other purpose, including any activity associated with any other professional interest a former Member may personally have.

7.8.10. Generally rates are payable annually in advance. The Finance Office will review the rates due and apportion them correctly, with the recoverable amount of rates calculated up to and including the end date the winding up period. The remaining amount will be an amount owed to the Assembly Commission by the former Member. It is the responsibility of each Member to contact LPS to notify them of their intention to end their lease, and to arrange for the appropriate refund. All refunds of rates should be submitted to the Assembly Commission, so that the refund may be offset against any recovery being sought by the Finance Office.

7.8.11. It is important to note that recoupment of a remaining balance of rates overpayment is a matter for the former Member as an individual. The Assembly Commission will not seek repayment of rates from LPS on behalf of the former Member. Repayment of the overpaid amount should be made within a three-month period. Failure to make such payments may result in the initiation of legal proceedings to recover the amount in full.

7.8.12. If this situation arises, Members are advised to contact the Claims team for advice to ensure compliance to the specific conditions of the 2025 Determination in relation to rent is maintained.

## Constituency Office Start up and Maintenance costs

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7.8.13. Former Members may incur and recover costs associated with returning their constituency office to a pre-lease state. This may include costs such as sign removal, painting and cleaning services. These are recoverable out of COSUM costs.

7.8.14. To recover such dilapidation costs during the winding up period, there needs to be evidence that the lease places an express requirement on the former Member to return the office to a state ready for renting.

## Security Measures

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7.8.15. Where a former Member incurs ongoing costs such as a support subscription for Lone Worker Devices, these will continue to be recoverable during the winding up period.

## Constituency Office Operating Costs

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7.8.16. The maximum amount of COOC allowable will be calculated on a pro-rata basis to the end of the winding up period, up to a limit of 25% of the current COOC allowance. This will be notified to former Members in writing and accompanied by a COOC status report.

7.8.17. Former Members can recover those on-going costs, such as postage, stationery, telephones and utilities, which were incurred up to the end of the winding up period. Former Members may also recover removal costs more specific to winding up, such as costs incurred to terminate utility agreements, to purchase packing boxes, furniture removal services, and shredding services.

7.8.18. During a period of winding up, stationery and office consumables purchased from Office Resources may continue to be used. As such, these must only be used to wind up Assembly business. They cannot be used to issue any circulars or final constituency wide letters. However, stationery which includes the Assembly Blue Flax logo and pre-paid envelopes must not be used during the winding up period. As with all resources, these items must not be used for any other purpose, including party political activity. Inappropriate use will be treated as a breach of the 2025 Determination and this guidance and may necessitate a recovery of any costs paid.

7.8.19. Unused items of stationery purchased through the Office Resources team, may be returned, so that the costs can be refunded to former Members.

## Petty Cash

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7.8.20. When a Member leaves the Assembly, the full float will need to be accounted for in terms of final receipts and remaining cash float. Members should complete the relevant section of their final MF20 form to indicate that it is their last claim and that they are going to make the repayment of the petty cash. Repayments can be made directly to the Assembly Commission bank account or by cheque. Members should contact the Claims team for payment details. Any shortfall in petty cash will be deducted from any outstanding payments payable to the Member in accordance with paragraph 39.

## 7.9 Support Staff Costs

### Payment of Members Support Staff Salaries

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7.9.1. Support staff costs can continue to be recovered for existing staff, for a period of up to three months following a Member's resignation. However, payments to support staff can only be made for those staff who are working to assist former Members to wind up their Assembly business. Payments cannot be made to staff who may be carrying out activities deemed to be party political in nature or for other Members.

7.9.2. The total support staff costs recoverable are reproduced for the current year in Annex 4.1. The maximum allowance payable from 1 April to the end of a Member's winding up period will therefore be pro-rata.

7.9.3. Payments to support staff will continue on existing contractual terms until notification is received from the former Members, confirming their winding up arrangements. It is imperative that former Members contact the Pay and Pensions team as soon as practicable following resignation to ensure that all statutory obligations regarding notice periods and redundancy payments are met.

## Notice of Termination of Employment for Members' Support Staff

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7.9.4. Following the resignation of a Member, they must ensure that their support staff are informed as soon as possible that their current role will no longer exist and that their post will become redundant. This will ensure that all contractual notice periods can be honoured during the winding up period.

7.9.5. Separate guidance which deals specifically with redundancy is available from the HR Office section of the Members' Portal [Redundancy Guidelines for Members](#).

7.9.6. Statutory redundancy calculations will be issued for support staff. Statutory redundancy calculations are based on the formal date of notification of redundancy, therefore, former Members must contact the Payroll and Pensions team to ensure these calculations are as accurate as possible. A **Redundancy Notification Form (RD1)** and a **Leaver Notification Form (N1)** must be completed and submitted to the Pay and Pensions team for each member of staff.

7.9.7. The cost of statutory redundancy payments will be paid from the Category 3 (Ancillary Support Staff) costs as set out in the 2025 Determination and are not charged against the pro-rata annual limit for Category 1 costs. However, pay in lieu of notice, or payments for leave that has been accrued but not been taken, will be charged against the pro-rata Category 1 costs limit.

7.9.8. If Members require guidance on this matter please contact the Pay and Pensions team by emailing [payteam@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:payteam@niassembly.gov.uk).

## 7.10 Disability Costs

7.10.1. Where a Member is claiming Disability costs in relation to a disability they have, these may continue to be paid for up to three months following the date of resignation. It is not an automatic entitlement and can only be claimed during the winding up period for those costs that are actually incurred. Therefore, particularly where these costs are being claimed to cover salary costs, former Members must notify the Pay and Pensions team as soon as costs cease to be incurred.

## 7.11 Winding Up Declaration

7.11.1. When a former Member is satisfied that they have concluded their Assembly business and wind up is complete, they must complete and submit the **Declaration of Completion of Winding up Form (MF15)**, with the final WUC claim. At an election time, only after all financial affairs are concluded will Resettlement Allowance be paid, this includes the payment of the final WUC claim. A copy of this form is available on the Finance Office Section of the Members' portal.

*Section 7 – Associated Annexes:*

*Annex 7.1      Winding Up Checklist*

# 8 Submission Process

## 8.1 Overview

8.1.1. By way of summary, Members can only recover costs incurred if:-

- a) the costs were actually incurred by Members;
- b) cost was incurred in carrying out their functions as a Member;
- c) cost has not been recovered from any other person; and
- d) cost has not reimbursed to Member by any other person.

8.1.2. All claims for the recovery of costs, including requests for the recovery of support staff costs, must be submitted in the manner prescribed in this Administration Guide.

## 8.2 Submission Methods

8.2.1. Documentation should be sent to the Finance Office electronically.

8.2.2. Members should retain the originals and must be available for review by internal or external audit, if requested. Details on how long to retain records can be found in the [Retention of Records](#) section of this guide.

8.2.3. Digital copies must be clear, scanned copies of original documents. Photographs of documents will not be accepted. All submissions should be of a high quality, with all information and figures clearly legible.

8.2.4. In order to ensure that forms are not missed, Members are asked not to send information or forms to individual email addresses. Rather, Members are asked to use the established addresses for Payroll and Members Financial Services.

Forms in relation to Payroll, should be submitted to [payteam@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:payteam@niassembly.gov.uk)

Forms for Members' claims should be submitted to [membersfinance@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:membersfinance@niassembly.gov.uk)

8.2.5. In the absence of a fully integrated computer package, that accepts electronic submissions, Members may choose to continue to submit documentation in hard copy, either submitted by post or handed into the Finance office. Members should not send additional copies via email to avoid duplicate administration.

8.2.6. In exceptional circumstances where original documentation is not available for submission, Members should seek prior approval to submit alternatives.

## 8.3 Signatures

8.3.1. All forms and declarations must be certified by Members. Where claim forms and declarations are issued from an official Assembly email account, this will be accepted as a certified submission without the requirement for a signature. Where documents are issued from an unofficial email account, these will continue to require a signature, however, an electronic version of the signature may now be used as well. The electronic signature, or e-signature, may be in any format, for example a JPEG image. On taking up office, Members will be asked to provide three sample signatures, which will be used for e-signature identity verification purposes. Each claim will be verified against these samples and if there is any doubt on the validity of a signature, the claim will be held and the Member will be asked to confirm that it is their original signature. This information will be held for each mandate.

8.3.2. This also applies where a Member has delegated authority to a representative. Further information on delegation of authority is available in [Role of the Finance Office](#)

8.3.3. On behalf of the Assembly Commission the Finance Office is responsible for the administration of the Determinations. The team which has specific responsibility for assisting Members and processing payments is the MFS team. The team also has responsibility for the administration of the centrally provided pension scheme for Members' support staff.

8.3.4. The team is located on the fourth floor of Parliament Buildings. Full contact details of the MFS team are published in the Finance Office's section of the Members' Portal:

<https://niassembly.sharepoint.com/sites/MembersIntranet-Finance>

8.3.5. The MFS team consists of two sections: -

- a) Pay and Pensions team; and
- b) Claims team.

8.3.6. The MFS team deals with the day-to-day operational administration of the 2025 Determination and paragraph 2 of the 2026 Determination, by paying salaries, allowances and claims for costs incurred by Members, as well as acting as a payroll bureau for Members to pay their support staff.

8.3.7. The MFS team offers advice and support to Members on all aspects of financial support, including issues relating to the admissibility of claims and compliance with the specific requirements of the Determinations. The team also advises on budgeting to ensure the maximum allowances and levels of funding are not exceeded.

8.3.8. Every claim submitted for the recovery of costs is verified by the team to ensure compliance with the requirements of the 2025 Determination.

8.3.9. The team also oversees the administration of the Assembly Members' (Pensions) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016 and the associated Assembly Members' Pension Scheme (AMP Scheme). Part of this administration is outsourced by the Pension Trustees to a third party pension administration company, ISIO Ltd (formerly Deloitte). The MFS team manages the ISIO contract, on behalf of the Trustees, helping and supporting the Trustees with the day-to-day operation of the AMP Scheme.

8.3.10. In applying the rules and guidance for claiming financial support, the MFS team may make such arrangements as is deemed appropriate for the administration of the Determinations. Under this authority the team may: -

- a) On the submission of a claim by a Member, reimburse costs incurred by that Member, or make a payment for support staff costs;
- b) Issue clarification or guidance to Members on the operation of the rules for claiming financial support;
- c) Set the form and manner in which claims and declarations must be submitted;
- d) Set the time limits for the submission of the claims and ensure that the consequences of non-compliance, as detailed in paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination, are applied in full; and
- e) In considering any matter under the Determinations, the MFS team shall consider whether Members have adhered to the guidance issued.

## 8.4 Managing Expenditure

- 8.4.1. Unless specified elsewhere, all budgets and financial limits set out in this guidance are for a year commencing on 1 April and ending on 31 March of the following year. All references to a "year" are to be read in this context.
- 8.4.2. Members are responsible for planning, forecasting and managing their own budgets. Members can only recover costs up to the limits of the provisions set out in the 2025 Determination. In exceptional circumstances, Members may incur business costs above the stated limits of the 2025 Determination. However, these may not be recovered and Members would be responsible for paying these individually.
- 8.4.3. To assist Members, a monthly expenditure and budget report is provided by the Claims team. This report is for each category of expenditure, and includes all costs claimed or paid to the end of each month, compared to the maximum amount recoverable or due. The report will include estimates of commitments that have already been made against funding limits, such as the monthly/quarterly rent or contractual salary payments.
- 8.4.4. Delegation of Financial Authority section.
- 8.4.5. For the purpose of electronic authorisations, an official Assembly email account is one which has been issued by the IS Office to a Member or their nominated representative.

## 8.5 Required Evidence

- 8.5.1. A suite of forms has been created in order to assist Members to submit the correct evidence, along with capturing the necessary certifications. Use of the current version of the forms will ensure full compliance with the 2025 Determination. These are available electronically on the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal:

<https://niassembly.sharepoint.com/sites/MembersIntranet-Finance/SitePages/Member-and-Party-Forms.aspx>

- 8.5.2. Payments of costs incurred, and recovery of staff costs, will only be made on receipt of signed forms, with valid documents attached, as required.

8.5.3. Paragraph 40 of the Determination places a duty on Members to keep financial records, in order to explain how costs have been incurred and recovered. Members are not entitled to recover costs unless they can produce evidence in relation to that cost. Where scanned copies are submitted, the original must be retained by the Member and be available for audit over the course of the mandate if requested. Further information on the retention of financial records is available in [Retention of Records](#) section.

## Evidence for Goods and Services claims

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8.5.4. Payments will be made on the submission of the appropriate claim form, as long as it is accompanied by original documentation; payment will not be made on statements, or reminder letters. Evidence must not be redacted or manipulated.

8.5.5. There are a number of methods to claim costs. Direct Payment is the preferred method for COOC and other costs. Reimbursement should only be used when the goods have to be paid for on collection, when bills have to be paid within seven days of receipt, or where direct debits have been set up with utility companies to avail of discounts.

### *Methods of claiming - Reimbursement*

8.5.6. Once an invoice has been paid or a direct debit has been actioned, a reimbursement can be claimed using a **Reimbursement Payment Form (MF5)**, attaching the invoice, or the receipt.

8.5.7. The reimbursement can only be made into the nominated bank account following completion of a **Reimbursement Details Form (MF2)**. Nominated bank accounts must only be in the name of the Member, or in the name of the Member and the Member's spouse, civil partner or cohabitant.

### *Methods of claiming - Direct Payment:*

8.5.8. Instructions to make direct payments to the supplier should be requested using a **Direct Payment Form (MF4)** attaching the invoice.

8.5.9. The supplier will be contacted by the Claims team in order to set up a supplier account. Members should notify their suppliers to reduce the administration time of this process.

8.5.10. Following successful completion of the supplier set up, the invoice will be added to the next available payment run.

### *Invoice and Receipts*

8.5.11. Invoices provided by third party suppliers must contain the following information:

- a) Name and address of supplier;
- b) Tax point date;
- c) Detail of the nature/type of service/goods provided;
- d) Date service was delivered, or date the goods were received; and
- e) For the provision of a service, details of the agreed rate and or materials used.

8.5.12. Receipts should only be provided by third parties where an invoice is not suitable, for example, when buying small consumables. A receipt must contain the minimum information:

- a) Date of purchase;
- b) Name and location/address of supplier;
- c) Breakdown of cost and details for each item; and
- d) Total cost

8.5.13. Where the claim is for materials produced by the service provider, such as flyers or business cards, a copy of the material must also be provided.

8.5.14. For invoices, or claims sent electronically, (either Direct payments or Reimbursements), Members are asked to note that all claims must be accompanied by the correct, fully completed (including tick boxes) and signed claim form (**MF4 or MF5 payment form** etc.). General cover emails indicating authorisation for payment **WILL NOT** be accepted.

8.5.15. While Members are not bound by specific public procurement requirements, under the Ten Principles which underpin the framework of support, Members are required to ensure that any costs incurred provide value for money.

8.5.16. Members are not required to submit a copy of any contract for services for the recovery of costs. However, Members are reminded of their obligations under the provisions of paragraph 40 of the 2025 Determination to keep all financial records, including copies of quotations and contracts.

8.5.17. Once an invoice has been received it should be forwarded to the Claims team for direct payment to the supplier, or paid by the Member and reimbursement sought.

## Evidence for Support Staff Costs

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8.5.18. Member's support staff are paid through the centralised payroll bureau operated by the Assembly Commission. Payments, or changes to payments, to support staff will only be made following the receipt of instructions directly from the Member to the Pay and Pension team, using the payroll forms provided in the Members' Portal.

8.5.19. Use of these forms will ensure that:

- a) the Member provides sufficient and clear detail to the Pay and Pensions team so the support staff pay is accurate and complete;
- b) the Member provides sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the payment or change is compliant with the 2025 Determination; and
- c) the Member provides sufficient evidence to comply with HMRC and other current legislation and regulations.

8.5.20. Each form includes a detailed description of the purpose of the form, instructions for use, and details of evidence that must be provided.

8.5.21. Forms must be submitted on a timely basis following a change in employment details to ensure the accuracy of the support staff payments. **The payroll team must be informed immediately of any leaver details, changes of address or changes in bank details.**

8.5.22. Instructions to the payroll must be received by the 12th calendar day of each month.

8.5.23. Before submitting payroll forms, Members must consider the following:

- a) **All sections are completed.** It is common for sections and boxes to be left uncompleted, so Members must ensure that the form is completed in **full** before submission.
- b) **Signed by Member and Employee, where appropriate.** Signatures may be digital.
- c) **Declarations are not left blank.** The declarations ensure the instruction is compliant with the 2025 Determination. Failing to complete declarations may prevent recovery of costs.
- d) **Dates are completed.** Forms include effective dates. This is the date the instruction is to take effect from/to and must be completed to ensure accuracy of support staff payments.
- e) **Consistency of information.** Information can be duplicated across the documents that Members must supply, especially for new starters. This information must be consistent, for example details in **the Employee Contract** must match details in **New Support Staff Details Form (A1)** and job advert.

8.5.24. There are key areas where Members must supply a lot of documentation: New Starters and Sick Absence. The evidence for each of the areas is outlined below.

8.5.25. In advance of adding new Support Staff to payroll, the following documents and actions must be completed:

- a) **Contract of Employment –**
  - Members should only amend parts of the contract which are in brackets, or in bold. It must be fully completed.
  - It must be signed by both parties and the details included must match the **New Support Staff Details Form (A1)**.
  - A copy must be issued to employee and a copy retained by Member.
- b) **New Support Staff Details Form (A1) –**
  - Ensure it is fully completed.
  - Ensure 'Connected' or 'Associated person' boxes are ticked if required. Include detail of the nature of the 'connection' or 'association'.
  - If the new starter is temporarily replacing a permanent staff member who is absent on leave, complete the 'Replacement Employee' section with the name of the permanent staff member.
- c) **Declaration of Compliance on Recruitment (DC1) -**
  - Ensure all the declarations are complete.
- d) **Copy of the Job Advert**
  - Job advert should include Name of Member, Job title, Job Description, Grade, Hours.
  - Details in the Job Advert must match **New Support Staff Details Form (A1)**.
  - Where the Job Advert is posted on-line, Members are advised to take a screen shot when the ad is live, as it may not be possible to retrieve a copy once the recruitment competition closes.
- e) **Job Description**
- f) **Person Specification**
- g) **P45 or Employee Starter Checklist**
  - If the employee does not have a P45 the Employee Starter Checklist must be completed.
- h) **Merit List**

8.5.26. Members must take action as soon as a member of support staff has a period of sickness absence. **Support Staff Sickness Absence Form SA1** should be used to inform the Pay and Pensions team of the start date of the sick absence.

8.5.27. Members must continue to provide the fit notes, received from the absent member of support staff, to Pay and Pensions team for the entire period of absence. Failure to provide fit notes may impact the support staff's eligibility to sick pay, both contractual and statutory.

8.5.28. Members should complete a **Member Support Staff Resumption of Duties Form (SA2)** when the staff member returns to work.

## 8.6 Deadlines for submissions

### Payroll Deadlines

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8.6.1. Payday is the third working day before the end of the month. The subsequent payroll cycle commences three working days after payday, with processing starting immediately.

8.6.2. Cut off dates, which are the latest date to submit payroll paperwork each month, are published on the Members' Portal, and are typically around 12th – 15th of month, or working day 12.

8.6.3. Instructions to add individuals to the payroll, or to make amendments for existing staff must be received by the cut-off date each month, in order to ensure that these are reflected in the correct month's payroll. Anything received after that date will not be processed, but instead will be processed the following month.

### Claims Deadlines

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8.6.4. Members should submit claims for the recovery of costs as soon as the cost is incurred and an invoice is received. The Claims team will issue a regular report which detail costs incurred to date, to assist Members in monitoring their actual spend against the maximum allowances recoverable.

8.6.5. Claims are paid according to the tax date of the invoice, irrespective of any period covered by the invoice, or when the service was delivered. At the end of each financial year Members have an extended period of time to submit invoices dated up to and including 31 March. This is notified to Members in advance by the Claims team. Claims received after this date, cannot be paid and will be returned to Members.

## 8.7 Retention of Records

8.7.1. Paragraph 40 of the 2025 Determination requires that Members must keep financial records sufficient to show and explain those costs incurred and recovered.

8.7.2. Financial records can be defined as any record information in any form (electronic or paper) created, received or shared as a requirement of the specific terms of the Determination, or the requirements of the Assembly Commission, as issued in the associated guidance. Examples include personnel files, such as staff contracts and recruitment records, sickness records, property rental agreements, claim records, including claim form and invoices, and annual declarations.

8.7.3. All records created by Members, including the financial records above, should be managed efficiently and effectively, and should not be retained for longer than is necessary for its lawful purpose. The current default standard retention period for HMRC records is six years plus the current financial year. Therefore, in order to comply with the provisions of paragraph 40, financial records should be retained for six full years plus the current financial year or one complete mandate, whichever has a later end date. Records must only be retained beyond this retention period if their retention can be justified for statutory, regulatory, legal or security reasons or for their historic value.

8.7.4. Members are advised to create a retention policy, which details the all types of records held and how long they will be kept. A schedule of the records that are destroyed or deleted should be retained and all information should be disposed of in a secure manner. The disposal periods for records retained for extended duration must be included and justified. More information on managing records and complying with relevant legislation can be found on Members' Portal [Information Standards - Home](#).

8.7.5. In determining the appropriate retention period for all records, Members may find it helpful to refer to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) who are the UK's independent regulator for data protection law and whose role is to help organisations with data protection rights by providing practical advice. ICO contact details are:

ICO - Northern Ireland Office  
10th Floor,  
Causeway Tower, 9 James Street South,  
Belfast,  
BT2 8DN

Email: [ni@ico.org.uk](mailto:ni@ico.org.uk)  
Website: [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

8.7.6. All documents should be made available for review by auditors as required. If, on review, any breaches on retaining proper documentation is highlighted, then further investigation will be undertaken as outlined in the Improper Claims section.

8.7.7. To find out how the Assembly Commission use, store or share the data we receive from Members, please refer to our privacy notice on the Members' Portal: [Members' Privacy Notice](#).

## 9 Review of Decisions and Improper Claims

9.1.1. If a Member has a concern regarding any decision in relation to the payment of a claim or the application of this guidance, the matter can be referred to the Head of Finance, by submitting a **Declined Payment Appeal Form (stage one) (MF11 (a))**. The Head of Finance will consider the concerns raised and review the decision. In doing so they will seek to ensure that the 2025 Determination, has been correctly and consistently applied by the MFS team. The outcome of an appeal will be notified to the Member within 15 working days.

9.1.2. Following notification of the appeal decision, if a Member still has a concern regarding the decision they may wish to refer the matter in writing to the Clerk/ Chief Executive for further consideration. A referral to the Clerk / Chief Executive must be made within one month of the appeal decision and should be done by completing a **Further Appeal Form (stage two) (MF11 (b))**.

9.1.3. In referring the matter to the Clerk / Chief Executive the Member must outline the basis for seeking the appeal including detail on how the 2025 Determination has not been applied correctly or consistently. The Clerk/Chief Executive's decision will be final. Neither the Head of Finance, nor the Clerk/Chief Executive can authorise a claim for payment if the claims falls outside the provisions of the 2025 Determination. To do so would result in irregular expenditure.

### Improper Claims

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9.1.4. The rules of the 2025 Determination and the Assembly Commission's guidance will be used to scrutinise every claim for financial support. In applying the rules and guidance, the MFS team may seek clarification of a claim. Any breaches of the rules, which may be highlighted, as a result of the scrutiny from the MFS team or from external and internal audit reviews, will be fully investigated by the Head of Finance. If it is found that a payment has been made in error, then the sanctions contained within the paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination regarding recoupment of payments will be applied. If appropriate, further action may be taken under the Fraud Prevention and Anti Bribery Response Plan, or a referral may be made to the Assembly Commissioner for Standards for further consideration or investigation.

9.1.5. There are a number of references throughout this guidance to the recovery of overpaid amounts. Paragraph 39 of the 2025 Determination provides for the recoupment of overpaid salary, costs, allowances, or support staff costs. This paragraph includes the provision for the deduction of overpaid amounts from any future amount to be paid to a Member under the 2025 Determination. If an overpayment has occurred, this amount will be notified to Members in writing.

9.1.6. Repayment of the overpaid amount should be made within a three month period. If the overpaid amount is not reimbursed during this time, it will be deducted from any future amounts payable to the Member, or any outstanding amounts due at the end of the winding up period. Failure to make such payments may result in the initiation of legal proceedings to recover the amount in full.

# 10 Compliance and Audit

## 10.1 Audit of Members' Claims

10.1.1. All payments to Members will be the subject of an external annual audit by, or on behalf of, the Commission as required under paragraph 40 of the 2025 Determination.

10.1.2. In the interest of openness and transparency, the Internal Audit team will undertake a further audit annually to assess the compliance with the 2025 Determination. A random sample of twenty-five per cent of Members will be selected. This audit will also include site visits to constituency offices as appropriate.

10.1.3. The scope of audits may include any or all of the following activities:

- a) Visits to offices;
- b) Discussions with individual staff members regarding duties undertaken;
- c) Transactional and field testing;
- d) Inspection of assets;
- e) Review of internal controls and risk management.

10.1.4. The Finance Office will provide guidance at each year on the full scope and expected timetable of any audit.

10.1.5. Under paragraph 40 of the Determination, Members must keep financial records sufficient to show and explain how costs were incurred and recovered. Retention should be in accordance with those periods agreed and published by the Assembly Commission. All documents should be made available for review by auditors as required.

10.1.6. If, on review, any potential breaches the rules of the 2025 Determination are highlighted, further investigation will be undertaken as outlined in the [Improper Claims](#)

10.1.7. Funding may be stopped, pending the final outcome of any investigation.

## 10.2 Annual Declaration of Compliance

10.2.1. Paragraph 41 of the 2025 Determination requires that each year, Members must make and submit a declaration that confirms they have complied with all the requirements of the 2025 Determination (**Declaration of Compliance MF12**). As part of the declaration, Members need to verify that a number of specific conditions continue to be met. This includes confirming that the approved office sign has not been amended; reviewed form DC2 with each support staff member; that records of attendance have been kept; that the minimum number of days required to receive the Assembly Travel Allowance has been met. If the minimum number of day attendance has not been achieved, Members should use this form to confirm how many days they actually attended Parliament Buildings.

10.2.2. Members are not entitled to recover any costs in a subsequent year until they make and send this declaration. Therefore, this annual declaration, along with the annual records of attendance, must be submitted as soon as practicable after the 31 March each year, to avoid any delay in the payment of costs, including rental payments and staff costs.

# 11 Publication of Expenditure

11.1.1. As required by Standing Order 76 (2) the Speaker will publish information on costs reimbursed to, or recovered by, Members under these arrangements in the form and at the intervals determined to be appropriate. However, for security reasons, the details of the amounts claimed by individual Members for Security Measures will not be published.

11.1.2. Currently recovered costs are published quarterly on the Northern Ireland Assembly website at:

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/your-mlas/members-salaries-and-expenses/>



# Annexes

## Annex 1.1

### **Extract from the 2025 Determination. Paragraph 46 (3) defines Functions of a Member as:**

(3) A member's functions as a member include the following functions –

- a) attending a sitting of the Assembly,
- b) attending a meeting of a committee or sub-committee of the Assembly,
- c) undertaking research or administrative functions which relate directly to the business of the Assembly,
- d) establishing or maintaining a constituency office,
- e) providing an advice service to constituents,
- f) attending meetings for the purpose of representing constituents in Northern Ireland, including meetings with a constituent or constituents,
- g) attending, with the approval of the Commission, any ceremony or official function or national or international conference as a representative of the Assembly, but not including attendance that relates wholly or mainly to that member's role as a party spokesperson or representative.

## Annex 1.2

### LIST OF BRIEFING NOTES PUBLISHED

The following Briefing Notes / updates have been issued to Members to provide additional advice and clarification on the recovery of costs and allowances. The Briefing Notes are published on the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal, or alternatively a copy may be requested from the MFS team.

Date	Document	Comment
11/3/2026	Briefing Note 43 – Year End Deadlines and Assembly Travel Allowance Submissions	Information on the 2025/26 year end processes
17/11/2025	Briefing Note 41 – Update on Operational, Administrative and Compliance Issues	Information on administrative changes
11/11/2025	Briefing Note 42 – Forecasting of Annual Allowances	Request for information from Members on forecasts of costs and allowances
7/2/25	Briefing Note 40 – 2025 Determination Briefing Note for Members	Information on the implementation of the 2025 Determination
2/12/24	Briefing Note 39 – Request for forecasting information (Briefing Note 38- withdrawn)	Request for information from Members on forecasts of costs and allowances
2/12/24	Briefing Note 38 – Request for forecasting information	<b>Withdrawn</b> - Request for information from Members on forecasts of costs and allowances
12/4/24	Briefing Note 37 - Guidance For Assembly Travel Allowance Returns (Amendment to Briefing Note 36- Year End Procedures)	Additional information on Travel Allowances at year end
8/3/24	Briefing Note 36 - 2023-2024 Year End Procedures	Information on 2023/24 year end processes
15/11/23	Briefing Note 35 – Forecasting Of Annual Allowances (Replacing Briefing Note No. 31)	Request for information from Members on forecasts of costs and allowances
27/10/23	Briefing Note 34 – Provision of Human Resource Service to Members	Information on the HR Service to Member – results of survey

## Annex 1.2

Date	Document	Comment
23/03/23	Briefing Note 33 - 2022-2023 Year End Procedures	Information on 2022/23 year end processes
21/12/22	Briefing Note 32 - Determination to amend Members' Salaries	Amendment to the Determination
6/12/22	Briefing Note 31 – Forecasting Of Annual Allowances (Replacing Briefing Note No. 29)	Request for information from Members on forecasts of costs and allowances
27/04/22	Briefing Note 30 – 2021/22 Year End Processes and 2022/23 Insurance Renewal	Information on 2021/22 year end processes and renewal of the employers'/public liability insurance policy for 2022/23.
16/12/21	Briefing Note 29 – Forecasting of Annual Allowances	Request for information from Members on forecasts of costs and allowances
03/12/21	Briefing Note No 28 – Provision of HR Services to Members	Information on the new service to Members, offering assistance on HR related matters.
19/10/21	Briefing Note 27 – Availability of Financial Support for Security Measures	Information on the availability of support under the Determination for security measures, claimed under Constituency Office Operating or Establishment expenses.
16/08/21	Briefing Note 26 – New Legal Expenses Insurance Policy	Information on a new legal expenses insurance policy for members which offers access to HR advice helpline and assists Members should they have to defend an employment related claim.
15/4/21	Briefing Note 25 - Processing Claims and Payroll Documents	<b>Withdrawn in part</b> - Information on the year end processes for 2020/21 and clarification on revised processes for submitting claims, following easing of COVID-19 restrictions.
14/1/21	Briefing Note 24 - Support Staff Working From Home	Information for Members on recovery of support staff costs associated with

## Annex 1.2

Date	Document	Comment
	<p>Appendix 1 - Support Staff Working From Home Form</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Support Staff Working From Home Form Version 2</p>	<p>home working, following the amendment to the Determination.</p>
18/12/20	<p>Briefing Note 23 - Support Staff Travel</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Support Staff Travel Claim</p>	<p>Information regarding the new provisions for support staff travel and how it may be claimed.</p>
18/12/20	<p>Briefing Note 22 - Petty Cash System</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Application for Petty Cash Float</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Expenditure Report and Claim</p>	<p>Information regarding the operation of a new petty cash system and the application forms</p>
27/8/20	<p>Briefing Note 21 - "The Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) (Amendment) Determination 2020</p>	<p>Information on implementation of the amending Determination and how it affects the 2016 Determination.</p>
24/4/20	<p>Briefing Note 20 - Year End Procedures</p>	<p><b>Withdrawn in part</b> - Advice for Members on 2019/20 year end procedures.</p>
2/4/20	<p>Briefing Note 19 - Pension Estimates</p>	<p>Information concerning requests for pension estimates.</p>
27/3/20	<p>Briefing Note 18 - Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Update</p> <p>Appendix 1 - Declaration to accompany payment requests</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Declaration for year end and travel to Parliament Buildings</p>	<p><b>Withdrawn in part</b> - Updated information on the process for submitting claims and 2019/20 year end processes.</p>
23/3/20	<p>Briefing Note 17 - Coronavirus (COVID-19)</p>	<p>Further information on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on support staff working arrangements and constituency office operating costs.</p>
18/3/20	<p>Briefing Note 16 - Coronavirus (COVID-19)</p>	<p>Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on constituency office services and associated costs.</p>

## Annex 1.2

Date	Document	Comment
11/03/20	Briefing Note 15 - Coronavirus (COVID-19) - Members' Support Staff	Health advice and staff absence.
31/01/20	Briefing Note 14 - Recovery of Expenses to a Person Resident/Registered Outside the EU	Information relating to EU exit and impact on paragraph 10 of Determination.
27/1/20	Briefing Note 13 - Payments to Consolidated Fund and Charitable Giving	Donation of salary to Consolidated Fund or charitable organisation following statement by political parties.
20/1/20	Briefing Note 12 – Members’ Salaries and Allowances	Information on the changes to allowances and salaries following restoration of the NI Assembly, when the Determinations made by the Secretary of State were revoked.
28/11/19	Briefing Note 11 - Incidental costs of Parliamentary travel	Framework for reimbursement of incidental costs of Parliamentary travel to Members.
25/11/19	Briefing Note 10 - Rent And Rates - Office Signage And Displays	Guidance regarding constituency office signage and display materials, specifically in relation to the recovery of rent and rates.
13/11/19	Guidance for Members during the General Election 2019	
29/3/19	Briefing Note 9: 2018-19 - Travelling Abroad Post BREXIT	Information for travellers.
7/3/19	Briefing Note 8: 2018-19 - Financial Year End	<b>Withdrawn</b> - Processes and dates for year end claims
1/2/19	Briefing Note 7: Recovery of Expenses to a person resident/registered outside the European Union	Information to Members regarding the impact of the UK's exit from the EU, particularly in relation to paragraph 10.
8/11/18	Briefing Note 6: Constituency Office Operating Expenses - Sundry Expenditure	Information to Members on the changes to claiming Sundry

## Annex 1.2

Date	Document	Comment
		Expenses, following HMRC tax compliance review – final guidance.
1/11/2018	Briefing Note 5: Impact of Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) (Present period when there is no Executive) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2018	Summary of changes of new Determination and impact on salaries and allowances.
11/07/2018	HMRC Employer's Compliance Review: Sundry Constituency Office Operating Expenses	Briefing paper on review undertaken by HMRC and specific impact on Sundry Expenses.
02/02/2017	Updated Administration Guide	
23/01/2017	Briefing note to members on the financial arrangements during dissolution	Information to Members during an election period, following dissolution.
23/01/2017	Redundancy Guidelines for Members	
29/07/2016	Briefing Note 4 – Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016	Further information on the Determination and its impact.
25/07/2016	HMRC Tax Information	Letter from HMRC to Members
25/07/2016	Help for you and your constituents	A guide for Members of the devolved administrations on working HMRC (issued on behalf of HMRC)
19/07/2016	Constituency Office Operating Expenditure Refresher	
12/05/2016	Briefing Note 3 – Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016	Information on the implementation of the 2016 Determination, detailing the key areas of change, particularly for the recovery of support staff costs.
08/04/2016	Briefing Note 2 – Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016	Further information on the implementation of the 2016 Determination, detailing the key areas of change.

## Annex 1.2

<b>Date</b>	<b>Document</b>	<b>Comment</b>
25/03/2016	Briefing Note 1 – Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016	Information on the implementation of the 2016 Determination, detailing the key areas of change.

## Annex 1.3

### THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

Identified by the Nolan Committee in their First Report on Standards in Public Life - May 1995.

Principle 1: *Selflessness*

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.

Principle 2: *Integrity*

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Principle 3: *Objectivity*

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts or recommending individuals for awards or benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Principle 4: *Accountability*

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Principle 5: *Openness*

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Principle 6: *Honesty*

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Principle 7: *Leadership*

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

## Annex 1.4

### TEN PRINCIPLES

In consultation with Party Leaders in 2010, a set of Ten Principles to guide the framework of financial support was agreed. These principles still underpin the financial support framework and the arrangements for claiming the support.

#### Principle 1

Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) have a duty to observe the seven Nolan principles of public life in all aspects of incurring and claiming expenditure.

#### Principle 2

MLAs have a right to be properly supported in carrying out their Assembly functions.

#### Principle 3

Any amount claimed must be in respect of expenditure that has been wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in respect of a Member's Assembly functions.

#### Principle 4

The system for claiming expenditure incurred by MLAs in performing their Assembly functions should be based on the recovery of actual expenditure, not on an entitlement to allowances.

#### Principle 5

Openness and transparency about expenditure incurred by MLAs will predominate, subject only to data protection, security considerations and inordinate or disproportionate costs.

#### Principle 6

Resources provided to enable MLAs to undertake their Assembly functions must not, directly or indirectly, benefit party political funding or be used for party political activities.

#### Principle 7

Arrangements should be avoided which may give rise to an accusation that an MLA, or someone close to an MLA, is obtaining an element of profit from public funds, or that public money is being diverted for the benefit of a political organisation

#### Principle 8

MLAs will seek to ensure that any expenditure incurred provides value for money for the taxpayer.

#### Principle 9

MLAs will take personal responsibility for ensuring that any claims made in their name for expenditure incurred in respect of their Assembly functions are correct and proper.

## Annex 1.4

### Principle 10

For all expenditure claimed, MLAs must act within the spirit of the rules as well as within the letter of the rules. The Assembly Commission (the “Commission”) will publish the rules and detailed guidance on the system for claiming expenses, and Assembly officials will provide any further guidance that may be required by MLAs.

## Annex 1.5

### CURRENT CLAIM FORMS

All claim forms and declarations are listed below and are available electronically from the Finance Office section of the Members' Portal.

<b>N1</b>	<b>Members' Information Form</b>
<b>C1</b>	<b>Office Holders' Details Form</b>
<b>B1 (m)</b>	<b>Change of Bank Details Form</b>
<b>EC1</b>	<b>Members' Employment Changes Form</b>
	<b>Employee Starter Checklist</b>
	<b>Contract of Employment</b>
<b>DC1</b>	<b>Declaration of Compliance on Recruitment</b>
<b>DC2</b>	<b>Support Staff Declaration</b>
<b>A1</b>	<b>New Starter Form – support staff</b>
<b>AG2</b>	<b>Temporary Support Staff Registration Form</b>
<b>AH1</b>	<b>Additional Hours Form – support staff</b>
<b>A2</b>	<b>Contract Amendment Form – support staff</b>
<b>PF1</b>	<b>Performance Review Pay Increase Form – support staff</b>
<b>RD1</b>	<b>Redundancy Notice Form – support staff</b>
<b>L1</b>	<b>Leaver Notification Form – support staff</b>
<b>M1</b>	<b>Maternity Leave Form – support staff</b>
<b>P1</b>	<b>Paternity Leave Form – support staff</b>
<b>AA1</b>	<b>Adoption Leave Form – support staff</b>
<b>K1</b>	<b>Keeping in Touch payment form – support staff</b>
<b>SA1</b>	<b>Sick Absence Notification Form – support staff</b>
<b>SA2</b>	<b>Sick Absence Resumption of Duties – support staff</b>
<b>SSTF1</b>	<b>Support Staff Travel Claim Form</b>
<b>B1</b>	<b>Bank Details Change Form – support staff</b>
<b>MF1</b>	<b>Signature Verification</b>
<b>MF2</b>	<b>Reimbursement Details</b>
<b>MF3</b>	<b>Sharing Agreement</b>
<b>MF4</b>	<b>Direct payment</b>
<b>MF5</b>	<b>Reimbursement</b>
<b>MF7</b>	<b>Rental Declaration</b>
<b>MF8</b>	<b>Pre-Approval Cost Request</b>
<b>MF9a</b>	<b>Pre-Approval Costs Decision</b>
<b>MF10</b>	<b>Premises Declaration Form</b>
<b>MF11a</b>	<b>Declined Payment Appeal Form (stage one)</b>
<b>MF11b</b>	<b>Further Appeal Form (stage two)</b>
<b>MF12</b>	<b>Annual declaration on compliance</b>
<b>MF13</b>	<b>Disability Costs Application</b>
<b>MF15</b>	<b>Completion of Winding Up Declaration</b>
<b>MF16</b>	<b>Delegation of Financial Authority</b>
<b>MF19</b>	<b>Petty Cash Float Request</b>
<b>MF20</b>	<b>Petty Cash Reimbursement Claim Form</b>
<b>MF23</b>	<b>Recall Costs</b>

## Annex 3.1

### CURRENT LEVEL OF REMUNERATION PAYABLE UNDER PART 1 OF THE 2016 DETERMINATION

Table 1 – Member’s Annual Salary – as at 1 April 2026

<b>Role</b>	<b>Annual Salary</b>
Member	£67,200
Member of the Commission	£73,200
Chairperson of a Statutory Committee or of the Public Accounts Committee	£79,200
Speaker	£105,200
Principal Deputy Speaker or Deputy Speaker	£73,200
First Minister or deputy First Minister	£139,200
Northern Ireland Minister	£105,200
Junior Minister	£73,200

## Annex 3.2

**Tables 1, 2 and 4 – Travel Allowances for Members, and Staff Travel Allowance from 1 April 2026**

Constituency	Table 1 - Annual Constituency Travel allowance (£)	Table 2 - Annual Assembly Travel allowance (£)	Table 4 - Annual Staff Travel (£)
Belfast East	300	710	290
Belfast South	300	710	290
Belfast North	300	710	290
Belfast West	300	710	290
North Down	300	1,060	390
Strangford	880	1,290	590
Lagan Valley	880	1,870	750
South Antrim	880	2,100	830
Upper Bann	880	3,150	1,110
East Antrim	880	3,490	1,210
South Down	1,180	3,490	1,280
North Antrim	1,180	4,540	1,560
Mid Ulster	1,180	5,000	1,690
Newry and Armagh	1,180	5,000	1,690
East Londonderry	1,180	5,930	1,950
Foyle	300	6,850	1,990
West Tyrone	1,470	6,970	2,310
Fermanagh and South Tyrone	1,470	7,200	2,370

## Annex 4.1

**Table 1 – Current year’s support staff funding**

<b>Table 1 : Summary of support staff funding by category</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>What is covered</b>	<b>Value (£)</b>
Category 1	Category 1 is a Members main budget for the recovery of support staff salaries	98,700
Category 2	Covers the costs of HR, legal or general employment related costs associated with the employment of staff.  Staff travel can also be recovered	2,500  - Annual Funding limit applies (see annex 3.2, table 4), per constituency
Category 3	Covers ancillary staff costs like employers' contributions to National Insurance, employers' contributions to pension schemes and statutory redundancy	-Not capped
Category 4	When a Member has reduced number of permanent staff as a result of staff absences, Category 4 funding covers the cost of temporary replacement staff	Value is linked to the staff member being replaced
Category 5	When a Member is absent due to maternity, adoption or shared paternity, Category 5, covers the cost of additional staff to support the Member.	25,000  - Payable for maximum of 6 months

## Annex 4.2

Table – Current year’s Support Staff annual salaries and hourly rates.

<b>Table 2 – Updated Extract of Table 4 from the 2025 Determination – Staff Salaries</b>			
Salary with effect from 1 April 2026			
Grade	Pay Point	(3) Annual Salary (£)	(4) Hourly rate (£)
Grade 1	1	29,140	15.15
Grade 1	2	30,876	16.05
Grade 2	1	36,124	18.78
Grade 2	2	37,330	19.41
Grade 3	1	44,042	22.89
Grade 3	2	45,317	23.56

## Annex 7.1

### Winding up Checklist

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#### *General*

- Meet with Finance Office team, at the earliest opportunity, to discuss what you need to do;
- Check your personal email address is up to date, as well as your home address - this is where your final payslip and P45 will be sent;
- Confirm bank details for resettlement payment, if eligible;

#### *Office Costs*

- Decide what date you will keep the constituency office open to;
- Check the notice periods for any office or accommodation leases, service contracts and equipment lease agreements and give notice as soon as you can.
- Complete and submit the Annual Declaration of Compliance MF12 form, with travel record of journeys to the Parliament Buildings;
- Return all paper/envelopes/compliments slips bearing the NI Assembly logo to Office Resources;
- Return all IT equipment supplied by the Assembly Commission;
- Submit outstanding Constituency Office Operating Costs claims;

#### *Staff Costs*

- Discuss final dates of service with your employees;
- Issue redundancy notices to your employees;
- Complete and submit an Employee Leaver notification form (L1) for each of your employees;
- Complete and submit a Member support staff redundancy notification (RD1) form;

#### *Winding up Final Tasks*

- Settle any recoupments owed to the Assembly Commission;
- Note the date your winding up period ends and ensure all expense claims are submitted; and
- Complete and submit the final **Completion of Winding up Declaration (MF15)** form to the Finance Office to confirm that you have completed winding up your Assembly business.