



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# **Inclusive Parliament Review: Review of our Dignity at Work Arrangements**

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### Terms of reference

#### Review of our dignity at work arrangements

#### Objective

The review of Scottish Parliament's dignity at work arrangements by the end of April 2026 is an action agreed in the [Strategic Delivery Plan](#). The purpose of the review is to ensure they:

1. reflect best practice and remain fully aligned with the Scottish Parliament's commitment to foster a dignified, respectful, and courteous culture for all who work and visit Parliament, in line with the:
  - [SPCB's Values](#) and the [Code of Conduct](#) which apply to its staff; and
  - [Nolan Principles in Public Life](#) which apply to all holders of public office, including Members and the [Code of Conduct for MSPs](#); and
2. support the SPCB, Members and Parliamentary Group Pools, as employers, to take a preventative approach to bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment and misconduct in line with the new duties for employers under the:
  - [Worker Protection \(Amendment of Equality Act 2010\) 2023](#); and
  - [Employment Rights Act 2025](#)

#### Governance

Under the Scotland Act, the SPCB may delegate any of its functions - roles, responsibilities or tasks - to the Clerk/Chief Executive (or to the Presiding Officer). This delegation transfers the authority and responsibility to carry out those functions on behalf of the SPCB. Certain functions, however, remain reserved to the SPCB.

The Act also allows the Clerk/Chief Executive to authorise any member of staff to exercise functions on their behalf and our Governance Framework sets out the broad functions and authorisations at senior levels.

Strategic activities under the strategic change objectives of the [Delivery Plan](#) are authorised at SET level. In this context, the Clerk/Chief Executive has authorised the Director of People, Communications and Inclusion to lead the delivery of the Inclusive Parliament change objective, including developing proposals to reaffirm core organisational values and review our dignity work arrangements, including the Sexual Harassment Policy and processes for reporting to ensure compliance with best practice and legislation.

The SPCB reserves setting terms and conditions of employment (including any reward-based policies, salaries, pensions and any significant or potentially contentious policies on HR practice) for parliamentary staff and Members' staff.

## **Background**

Over recent years, the demand for comprehensive workplace protections has intensified, driven by both staff advocacy and heightened public awareness.

### **The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023**

The [Worker Protection \(Amendment of Equality Act 2010\) 2023](#) introduces a transformative shift in workplace compliance and accountability. It creates a duty on all employers to take reasonable steps to prevent harassment from staff and third parties in the workplace, with whom they may interact. All employers at the Scottish Parliament must do the same, including the SPCB, Members and Parliamentary Group Pools.

The [EHRC guidance](#) on the duty makes clear that employers must take positive, proactive steps in advance of any claims and maintain constant auditing. This requires employers to anticipate scenarios in which their staff may be subject to sexual harassment and take pre-emptive actions to prevent such harassment taking place. Employers who fail to conduct risk assessments for sexual harassment are unlikely to be considered compliant. Notably the EHRC's list of who can count as a third party is also broad; this could include customers, clients, service users, self-employed contractors or freelancers, patients, students, friends and family of colleagues, delegates at a conference and/or members of the public. Further, if sexual harassment has taken place, an employer must take action to stop it from happening again. Employers who fail to meet these obligations may be subject to penalties, including fines and compensation uplifts for affected staff of up to 25% in cases where it is determined that the employer did not take adequate preventative steps. The EHRC can also directly enforce this law.

The [ACAS Guide on Preventing Sexual Harassment](#) provides useful information to help identify higher-risk factors. High risk factors include power imbalances, isolated work environments, alcohol presence, public-facing/third party facing roles and workplace cultures that tolerate sexism disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups like young people, and those in precarious roles such as fixed term contracts, internships characterised by uncertainty, insecurity, and lack of rights and protections. This includes when staff are working outside their normal workplace – for example, at conferences or meetings away – and at workplace social events.

### **Employment Rights Act 2025**

The new Employment Rights Act 2025 which became UK law in December 2025 introduces wide-ranging reform designed to enhance employee rights.

Although many details remain subject to consultation and phased implementation, proactive preparation will be essential for employers at the Scottish Parliament seeking to remain compliant and trusted by their staff.

The UK's Government anticipated implementation timeline, including changes relevant to this review:

**April 2026:** Employees who make a disclosure relating to sexual harassment will be protected from detrimental treatment because of that disclosure and the dismissal of an employee for doing so will be automatically unfair.

**October 2026:** Employer obligations to take *all* reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment and liability for third party harassment in respect of all protected characteristics under the [Equality Act 2010](#).

This means that all employers at the Scottish Parliament will need to update their policies and supporting arrangements to reflect these changes, including communicating the changes to their staff.

### Bullying and harassment of staff in parliaments

Parliaments are unusual workplaces. On the surface, they may appear like any other workplace, but they are made up of numerous separate businesses, each with their own leadership and teams. For example, Members are elected representatives and are not traditional employees and employ their own staff and organise this part of the workforce differently. This arrangement means that there is no central control and HR support found in other organisations.

This has the potential to lead to a lack of consistency of approach as well as power imbalances and a lack of accountability for misconduct. Issues like power imbalance we know can act as barriers to reporting of bullying and harassment. In that situation staff often do not report these issues due to fear of job loss, retaliation, or belief that nothing would change.

In 2018, Dame Laura Cox's report on bullying and sexual harassment in the House of Commons revealed a "culture of fear" where staff felt unable to report abuse due to fear of disbelief, isolation, retaliation and job loss – highlighting systemic tolerance and inadequate procedures that allowed misconduct to go unchallenged, leading to significant harm and calls for independent robust reforms.

Negative career impact or damage to working relationships were also raised in the Welsh Parliament's report on sexual harassment as a reason why staff may be discouraged from reporting misconduct.

### Scottish Parliament's zero-tolerance policy

In 2018, a large-scale survey at the Scottish Parliament found that that one in five staff – including one in three women – had experienced sexual harassment or sexist behaviour. This led to a series of wider reforms and a commitment to ensuring a safer working environment.

The survey also showed that while knowledge of the different reporting procedures was high, the percentage of those actually reporting anything was low. Further, those who had experienced such behaviour were the least likely to have confidence in the reporting processes.

As part of these reforms, the Scottish Parliament committed to taking a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment and misconduct. This included a statement of intent that all reported incidents would be independently investigated and met with appropriate action, under the relevant codes, policies and procedures. For this purpose, the Scottish Parliament engages independent external investigators and the Ethical Standards Commissioner to examine complaints against staff and Members, respectively.

The SPCB, in its governing role, committed to publishing the number of formal complaints under its [Sexual Harassment Policy](#). Since 2020, there have been no formal complaints to the Scottish Parliament's Independent Support and Advocacy Service. This does not include formal complaints to the Ethical Standards Commissioner and to political parties.

The Standards, Procedures and Public Appointments (SPPA) Committee also committed to monitoring complaints to the Commissioner, particularly in relation to the willingness of vulnerable people to bring complaints and the potential for unfounded complaints, and for ensuring investigations are conducted in complete confidence without information appearing in the media.

### Political party arrangements

Outside the Scottish Parliament, political parties have an important role to play. Parties have their own codes of conduct for members of their party and complaints related to violations of their codes are enforced by party leadership or electoral bodies.

### How do parliaments compare with other employers

This picture of low level of formal reporting is not unusual. While it can be an indicator that harassment and unacceptable behaviours are not taking place, it could also indicate a reluctance on the part of staff to come forward. External research consistently shows there are two main reasons employees do not report workplace issues:

1. Fear of retaliation
2. Lack of trust in the reporting process

In addition, it is worth noting the research<sup>1</sup> conducted by the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) in 2024 which shows there can be a significant gap between employers' confidence in workplace policies and employee experiences with bullying and harassment. Their study suggested that while 70% of employers agree that they have effective procedures for resolving interpersonal conflict, this confidence is not matched by employees who experience conflict, with just 36% reporting that it has been fully resolved.

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<sup>1</sup> [How employers are tackling bullying and harassment at work | CIPD](#)

## **Dignity at Work review - scope**

While there have been no formal reports under the Scottish Parliament's Sexual Harassment Policy, we know from this wider research that this cannot necessarily be taken as an indication that such behaviour is not taking place. As indicated above, people may feel unable to raise concerns formally for a variety of reasons. In addition, in high profile organisations, such as ours, staff might be hesitant to raise a formal complaint or raise issues due to the fear of the information becoming public.

In line with the new legal preventative duties and upcoming employee rights contained in the Employment Right Act 2025 outlined above, and to ensure the Scottish Parliament reflects current best practice, it is proposed to undertake a review of our existing dignity at work arrangements. The proposed terms of the review are set out below. The review is deliberately comprehensive as it is important that the SPCB, Members and Parliamentary Group Pools, as employers, not only comply with legislation but also act as models of good practice and lead by example.

## **Remit of this review**

The following are the main elements for the terms of reference for this review.

To identify:

- whether the Scottish Parliament's zero tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, and abuse ("inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour") is well understood, consistently applied and modelled by employers and those in leadership roles at the Scottish Parliament.
- whether staff feel respected, safe and protected from inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour.
- if there are inherent power imbalances that can leave staff vulnerable to exploitation or discrimination, based on:
  - employment status (SPS, Members' staff, and Parliamentary Groups' staff)
  - employment relationships.
  - protected characteristic as defined in the Equality Act.
  - workplace location, including lone working.
  - length of service
  - contractual status (hours, permanent/fixed term, paid/unpaid)
- the effectiveness of our interventions to date and the opportunities to scale these up and/or introduce new practices.
- whether there are barriers to improvement,
- preventative steps that can be taken to stop inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour happening in the first place.
- improvements to support vulnerable complainants, witnesses and other staff who may be directly affected by allegations of inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour.
- steps to bring about cultural change, including opportunities for partnership working with employers and trade unions at the Scottish Parliament to ensure

culture change can be delivered in an inclusive and sustainable way, without undermining the employment relationship between employers and their staff.

- opportunities to strengthen the information and data we hold and the effective and transparent reporting around this.

## Sources of information

- Previous review reports on parliamentary cultures (both internal and external), including Report of the Joint Working Group on Sexual Harassment (2018), The Bullying and Harassment of House of Commons Staff (2018), Bullying and Harassment of MSPs' Parliamentary Staff (2019), and The Speakers Conference on the Employment Conditions of Members' Staff (2023).
- SPS and Members' staff workforce data, staff surveys, HR casework, information from the Parliament's independent Investigation and Support and Advocacy services, and exit interviews
- Review existing policies, procedures, systems and guidance and the impact they have had on the people and culture.
- Insight and lived experience of SPS staff and MSPs' staff offices
- Insight from independent equality groups and trade unions.

## Learning and recommendations

- Provide a picture of the parliamentary culture as it is now and any sub-cultures in the Scottish Parliament.
- Advise on the strengths and weaknesses in the parliamentary culture and where weaknesses are identified, make recommendations to develop the open, respectful and safe culture we want.
- Share good practice from other organisations, including other legislatures and good practice from within parliament that will help us to implement the recommendations.
- Prioritise recommendations which will enable us to embed sustainable change and ensure improvements are implemented.
- Advise on the success and accountability measures that we will need to measure progress, change and whether it is achieving the impact required, and how this information can be shared with the public to build trust.

## Methodology

We will use a range of tools in order to consult, gather feedback and inform the review. A summary of these is set out below:

- **Survey:** We will conduct a short, anonymised survey to inform the review of the dignity at work arrangements, including policies, procedures, and complaints processes. A limited number of colleagues from the Colleague Experience team will compile the survey results into a summary report, to identify insights, ensuring no individual can be identified.

- **Anonymous and confidential feedback:** The Scottish Parliament's Independent Support and Advocacy Service will seek anonymous and confidential feedback from staff who have experienced, or witnessed, bullying and harassment and/or different parts of the reporting process to determine the scale and impact of inappropriate and/or harmful behaviours on staff.
- **Individual meetings with staff and Members:** We will arrange confidential meetings with staff and Members to seek their views on future developments. We will make it clear that this is not a mechanism for making complaints and signposting to the Independent Support and Advocacy Service will be provided to redirect any such complaints.

## **Specialist advice**

It is anticipated that further legal obligations will also be introduced on all employers through the Employment Rights Act 2025. Legal advice will be sought to ensure all legal, confidentiality and data protection requirements are fully considered and advice sought from other relevant SPS teams where appropriate, including Information Management and Governance Team.

## **Report of findings and recommendations**

The output of this review will include a set of recommendations which the SPCB can then consider and seek to implement or influence others to implement.

We will aim to present preliminary findings of this review to the SPCB in February and a final report in March. The full report will be published as soon as reasonably practicable thereafter.

**Inclusive Parliament Review update to MSPs and Members' staff from Presiding Officer**

**From:** Presiding Officers <PresidingOfficers@parliament.scot>  
**Sent on:** Monday, December 15, 2025 4:00:01 PM  
**To:** DL MSPs <DLMSPs@parliament.scot>; DL MSP Researchers <DLMSPResearchers@parliament.scot>  
**Subject:** Inclusive Parliament Review - Update

Dear Colleagues,

**INCLUSIVE PARLIAMENT REVIEW - UPDATE**

You may be aware of the Inclusive Parliament Review, which is designed to ensure that everyone working at or for the Parliament has a voice in the future design and delivery of our facilities, policies and services.

This allows us to meet people's needs and ensures we fulfil our respective legal responsibilities, as employers and service providers and helps us to deliver an inclusive and welcoming environment for all those who work here or visit Holyrood.

This note provides an update on various elements of the Review which will be of interest to Members. The work is being led by Lorna Hunter, Director of People, Communications and Inclusion, who would be happy to chat to you to provide further details.

**Policy Updates**

We are reviewing a range of policies that support our shared commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation of any kind. The purpose of the review is not simply to prevent unlawful behaviour but to promote best practice and create a safe and respectful workplace where such behaviour is unlikely to occur. This work strand will also ensure that we meet our new preventative duty under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023. This duty is an anticipatory duty, meaning that all employers at Parliament need to take a proactive and preventative approach to protecting their staff from workplace sexual harassment. While we each have a moral and legal obligation to safeguard our staff, employers working together in partnership on health and safety and wellbeing offers an effective means of supporting all staff at Parliament. To this end, our forthcoming consultation will bring all employers at Parliament together to develop and implement an action plan to ensure Parliament remains a safe and respectful workplace for all.

## **Facilities Review**

Work has also started to review our facilities at Holyrood to consider what we need in the medium to longer term. The SPCB committed to this consultation when it announced its interim position earlier this year.

An Accessibility Audit with a particular focus on disability has been completed and we expect to receive the report from this shortly. The next step will be to engage with you, staff and others who work here, trade unions, and equality groups who can speak with authority on the needs of those with different protected characteristics. This will include seeking feedback on the SPCB's interim position, along with the impacts captured in the Equality Impact Assessment, to identify barriers that people face and minimise any negative impacts. We will also take account of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's statutory code of practice when it comes into effect.

People working at and visiting Parliament rightly expect high quality, inclusive and accessible facilities. This consultation will enable us to make the best use of what we have and redesign or refurbish our facilities in an inclusive and affordable way.

## **Consultation with you and your staff**

We know from discussions with you, your staff and Party Leaders that these are matters you and your teams are keen to be involved in. With that in mind we have designed a range of avenues to enable you to feed in your views. We would encourage you and your teams to engage with these processes. Further information will be available but, in summary:

- The policy review consultation will take place between now and the end of January and Lorna is already working with Members' staff trade unions, the staff forum and other staff representatives. Initial feedback suggests there is a need to consult all staff using an online questionnaire, one-to-one meetings with staff and Members, and group discussions with trade unions and staff representatives.
- The facilities review consultation will take place between February and March 2026. We will agree our approach to consultation with trade unions and equality groups to ensure you, staff and others who work here are involved in the decisions that affect them.
- The consultations will be publicised widely using a variety of methods and Lorna will also be offering to come and speak about the work she is leading and to hear feedback.

The people best placed to ensure Parliament continues to be an inclusive and welcoming environment are the staff who work here. I would be grateful if you could encourage your staff to take part and ensure they have the time to participate in any scheduled discussions.

If you have any questions regarding the various aspects of activity set out here or the Inclusive Parliament Review more generally, please contact Lorna who will be very happy to chat.

Best wishes

**Rt Hon Alison Johnstone MSP**  
Presiding Officer

## **Inclusive Parliament Review update to SPCB staff from Chief Executive**

**From:** McGill D (David) <David.McGill@parliament.scot>  
**Sent on:** Monday, December 15, 2025 4:05:20 PM  
**To:** DL All Staff <DLAllStaff@parliament.scot>  
**Subject:** Inclusive Parliament Review - update

**Categories:** Governance - Inclusive Parliament Review

Dear colleagues

As you know, we are conducting an Inclusive Parliament Review which is designed to ensure that everyone working at or for the Parliament has a voice in the future design and delivery of our facilities, policies and services.

This allows us to meet people's needs and ensures we fulfil our respective legal responsibilities as an employer and service provider. It also helps us to deliver an inclusive and welcoming environment for all those who work here or visit Holyrood. This note provides an update on various elements of the Review. The Presiding Officer has written to all Members in similar terms.

The Review is being led by Lorna Hunter our Director of People, Communications and Inclusion. You'll see there is reference to consultations and further information on this will be issuing in the new year.

### **Policy Updates**

We are reviewing a range of policies that support our shared commitment to a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation of any kind. The purpose of the review is not simply to prevent unlawful behaviour but to promote best practice and create a safe and respectful workplace where such behaviour is unlikely to occur. This work strand will also ensure that we meet our new preventative duty under the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023. This duty is an anticipatory duty, meaning that all employers at Parliament need to take a proactive and preventative approach to protecting their staff from workplace sexual harassment. While we each have a moral and legal obligation to safeguard our staff, employers working together in partnership on health and safety and wellbeing offers an effective means of supporting all staff at Parliament. To this end, our forthcoming consultation will bring all employers at Parliament together to develop and implement an action plan to ensure Parliament remains a safe and respectful workplace for all. Employers at the Parliament include the SPCB, Members, Parliamentary Groups, contractors, the Scottish Government and Commissioners.

## **Facilities Review**

Work has also started to review our facilities at Holyrood to consider what we need in the medium to longer term. The SPCB committed to this consultation when it announced its interim position earlier this year.

An Accessibility Audit with a particular focus on disability has been completed and we expect to receive the report from this shortly. The next step will be to engage with you, Members and others who work here, trade unions, and equality groups who can speak with authority on the needs of those with different protected characteristics. This will include seeking feedback on the SPCB's interim position, along with the impacts captured in the Equality Impact Assessment, to identify barriers that people face and minimise any negative impacts. We will also take account of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's statutory code of practice when it comes into effect.

People working at and visiting Parliament rightly expect high quality, inclusive and accessible facilities. This consultation will enable us to make the best use of what we have and redesign or refurbish our facilities in an inclusive and affordable way.

## **Consultation**

There will be a number of ways for you to share your views and experiences to help shape the outcome of this piece of work. In line with our established processes, Lorna will engage the Trade Union Side (TUS), the Leadership Engagement Network and our new Colleague Engagement Forum. This will support my commitment to ensure colleagues at all levels have their say in making improvements that help to shape the positive culture that we all want.

Further information will be available but, in summary:

- The policy review consultation will take place between now and the end of January. We will approach it in the same way as we've done in the past. There will be a staff survey, and group discussions with the TUS and staff representatives.
- The facilities review consultation will take place between February and March 2026. We will agree our approach to consultation with the TUS and equality groups to ensure you are involved in the decisions that affect you.
- The consultations will be publicised widely using a variety of methods.

The people best placed to ensure Parliament continues to be an inclusive and welcoming environment are those who work here. Please do take the opportunity to get involved.

If you have any questions regarding the various aspects of activity set out here or the Inclusive Parliament Review more generally, please contact Lorna Hunter.

Regards

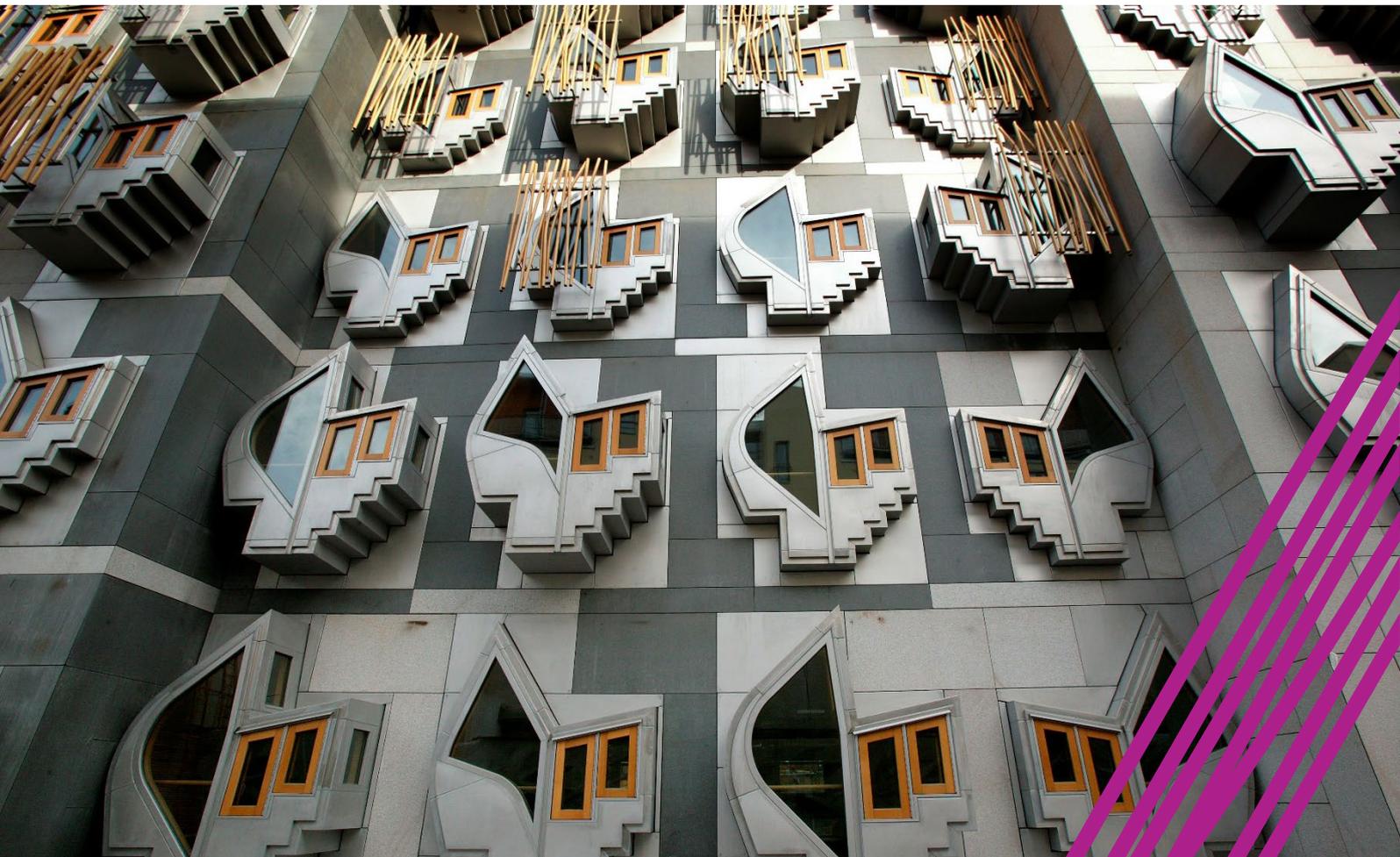
**David McGill**  
Clerk/Chief Executive



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

# Dignity at Work Arrangements Survey 2026

Suirbhidh mu  
Rèiteachaidhean Urram san  
Àite-obrach 2026



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# Executive Summary

## Overview

The Dignity at Work survey forms part of the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body (SPCB) Inclusive Parliament Review and was designed to gather anonymous views from SPCB and MSP staff on the clarity and accessibility of policies, reporting routes, and workplace culture. Its purpose is to inform updates to the Parliament's Dignity at Work arrangements, so they reflect best practice, support a preventative approach to bullying and harassment, and align with legal duties under forthcoming equality and employment legislation.

## Methods and limitations

The survey was open for two weeks in early 2026, used both closed and free text questions, and received responses from 174 SPCB staff (27% response rate) and 49 MSP staff (7% response rate). Confidentiality and anonymity were central to the design and participation was voluntary. No identifying data were collected, and respondents were asked not to include personal identifiers in free text comments. To minimise identifiability risks within a relatively small organisation, subgroup results are only reported where each category contains 15 or more respondents, with other results aggregated to a higher level.

The findings should be interpreted in the context of several limitations. Participation was voluntary and self-selected, so results are indicative rather than representative, and some groups contain small numbers. Percentages can therefore be volatile and absolute numbers are provided alongside them. However, despite these constraints, the survey offers robust thematic insights: the patterns reported are consistent across questions, reinforced by qualitative evidence, and provide a reliable basis for identifying recurring issues, concerns and opportunities for improvement.

## Key themes

### SPCB Staff

For SPCB staff, the findings present a largely positive picture of awareness, practical knowledge and team culture, but a more mixed picture of confidence in the adequacy of policies and clear areas for improvement identified in free text comments. Awareness of the Parliament's zero-tolerance approach is particularly high (86%), and most staff know how to access advice (82%) and report concerns (77%). Two areas stand out as weaker: induction information (only 40% agree they received clear information) and understanding detailed policies and procedures (68% agree, with 13% unsure). Confidence in how the system would function if concerns were reported shows variation across the measures: while a majority believe a report would be taken seriously (64%) and that they would be supported (63%), confidence in the adequacy of the policies themselves is lower, with just 54% confident and over a third (36%) expressing low confidence.

Culturally, SPCB staff report very strong team relationships, with 90% feeling valued by their team, 86% feeling supported and connected, and 82% perceiving dignity, courtesy and respect. Confidence in speaking up about inappropriate behaviour is similarly high (82%). The main area of concern is confidence in leadership action, where agreement falls to 60% and 28% disagree. Free text comments point to the need for clearer, more accessible

policies and training; more consistent leadership follow through and accountability (including for Members); and safer, more independent early-resolution routes. These are set against concerns about hierarchy, inconsistent challenge of poor behaviour, reduced psychological safety, and inclusion (e.g., for LGBT+ staff and those outside established longstanding informal social networks). Trends over time indicate improved practical awareness (e.g., knowing how to access advice rose from 57% in 2021 to 81% in 2026), but declining confidence in the adequacy of policies and limited change in wider cultural perceptions.

## **MSP Staff**

For MSP staff, the results show a much more mixed profile, with clear concerns about information clarity, confidence in reporting and organisational support. Induction information is a clear weakness (30% agree; 53% disagree), and policy detail is understood by fewer than half (43% agree; 40% disagree). Practical knowledge is moderate: 64% know how to access advice and 62% know how to report concerns, but disagreement is noticeably higher than among SPCB staff. Confidence in how concerns would be handled is substantially lower, with just 28% confident that policies are adequate, 47% that a report would be taken seriously, and 39% that they would be supported.

Despite this, MSP staff report very strong team-level cultures: 92% feel valued by their team, 83% feel supported and connected, and 73% perceive dignity and respect in their immediate environment. However, confidence to speak up (51% agree; 36% disagree) and confidence in leadership action (61% agree; 30% disagree) are much more divided. Free-text comments point to employment-based power dynamics, inconsistent induction and information, varied office cultures, and perceived risks in reporting - especially where concerns relate to the MSP themselves. There are also calls for independent and anonymous reporting routes and clearer, proactive communication about support. Compared with 2018, MSP staff show a marked decline in confidence, particularly around whether reports would be taken seriously and in knowing how to report.

## **Comparison Between SPCB and MSP Staff**

SPCB and MSP staff follow a broadly similar pattern across all questions, but the scale of responses differs systematically, with SPCB staff reporting higher clarity and confidence. The biggest gaps appear in policy understanding and practical knowledge. SPCB staff are more likely than MSP staff to understand underpinning policies (68% vs 43%), know how to access advice (82% vs 64%), and know how to report (77% vs 62%). MSP staff show substantially higher disagreement across these items. Confidence in how concerns would be handled also diverges sharply: SPCB staff are around twice as likely to feel confident that policies are adequate (54% vs 28%), notably more confident that a report would be taken seriously (64% vs 47%) and that they would be supported (63% vs 39%).

Both groups report strong team environments, but MSP staff are more polarised on confidence to speak up and on leadership action, with higher levels of disagreement. SPCB staff focus on clarity, consistency and early intervention, while MSP staff highlight structural risks, power imbalances and highly variable office cultures. Over time, SPCB staff show incremental changes - some positive, some negative - whereas MSP staff show a substantial decline in trust in reporting processes and outcomes.

## Key Themes

The key themes emerging from the responses received from both staff groups are outlined below.

### SPCB staff

Results from the policies and procedures questions (Q1-9) show that SPCB staff report strong awareness of the Parliament's zero-tolerance approach (86% agree) and good clarity around how to access advice (82%) and report concerns (77%). However, understanding of detailed policies and procedures is lower (68% agree, 13% neither), and induction information stands out as the weakest area, with only 40% agreeing they received clear information and 33% disagreeing. Confidence in how the system would function if inappropriate behaviour were reported is generally positive: 54% feel confident the policies are adequate, 64% confident a report would be taken seriously, and 63% confident they would be supported, although around a quarter report lower confidence across these areas and around one in ten are unsure. Overall, staff express reasonably strong confidence in the functioning of the system, though confidence in policy adequacy is somewhat lower than confidence in how reports would be handled.

The culture and behaviour questions (Q11-16) show a consistently positive view of team-level relationships and support, with high agreement on feeling valued by the team (90%), supported and connected (86%), and being treated with dignity, courtesy and respect (82%). Feeling valued by the employer is also positive at 80%, though less strong than team-based measures. Confidence in challenging inappropriate behaviour personally is high (82%), but confidence that leaders and managers will challenge inappropriate behaviour is noticeably weaker at 60%, with 28% disagreeing and 5% unsure. Taken together, the data suggest a strong and supportive team culture, coupled with moderate but not universal confidence in organisational processes and leadership action, and clearer gaps around early-stage information (induction) and understanding of policy detail.

### Sub-group analysis

Across SPCB staff sub-groups, most results are broadly aligned, with only a small number of clear differences. By sex, women and men follow almost identical patterns across all questions, with only minor differences: men show slightly higher confidence in speaking up and in leaders acting, while women show slightly more uncertainty. By age, responses to the policy and confidence questions are largely the same, and on culture items the only consistent difference is that the 45+ group more often selects 'strongly agree', especially on team-related items - an intensity difference rather than a directional one. By duration, patterns are again largely similar, with the only notable differences relating to information questions: newer staff report higher agreement on induction information, while longer-serving staff report higher agreement on session information and knowing how to report concerns.

### Free-text responses

In the free-text questions, SPCB staff comments highlight four closely related priorities for strengthening dignity and respect at work. Respondents want clearer, more accessible

policies and support materials, combined with practical training for staff, managers and Members. Alongside this, respondents emphasise the need for more consistent leadership follow through; clearer accountability for Members; and safer, more independent ways to raise concerns early.

Cultural reflections reinforce these themes, pointing to underchallenge of poor behaviour, reduced psychological safety and the effects of hierarchy and power dynamics. A recurring theme is a perceived two-tier culture in interactions with Members, where disrespect or bullying is not always addressed with the same rigour as staff behaviour. Concerns about inclusion, particularly for LGBT+ colleagues and those outside longstanding ingroups or informal social networks, also feature. Overall, staff welcome improvements to systems but stress that meaningful progress depends on consistent leadership modelling and a more supportive cultural environment.

## **MSP staff**

Results from the policies and procedures questions (Q1-9) show that MSP staff present a much more mixed picture of information availability, understanding and confidence in the system. Although awareness of the zero-tolerance approach is high (73% agree), responses to the other items vary considerably. Induction information is the weakest area, with only 30% agreeing they received clear information and over half (53%) disagreeing. Perceptions of information received during the parliamentary session are somewhat better, with 51% agreeing, but a third (34%) disagree. Understanding of policies and procedures is split almost evenly between agreement (43%) and disagreement (40%). For practical knowledge, 64% know how to access advice, and 62% know how to report concerns, though disagreement remains relatively high (22% and 26% respectively). Confidence in how the system would respond to a report is notably low: only 28% feel confident that policies are adequate, 47% that a report would be taken seriously, and 39% that they would be adequately supported. Low-confidence responses outweigh high-confidence responses in regard to policy adequacy and support, and are close to doing so in regard to a report being taken seriously, indicating limited trust in how concerns would be handled.

The culture and behaviour questions (Q11-16) show a much more positive view of immediate team culture, contrasted with greater concern about organisational culture and leadership action. MSP staff feel highly valued by their team (92% agree), well supported and connected (83% agree), and largely perceive dignity, courtesy and respect within their teams (73% agree). However, feeling valued by their employer is lower at 63%, with 20% disagreeing. Confidence to speak up is divided, with only 51% agreeing and 36% disagreeing, and confidence that leaders will challenge inappropriate behaviour is similarly mixed: 61% agree, but 30% disagree. Taken together, the findings indicate a strong and supportive team environment, alongside clear concerns about leadership action, organisational support, and the safety of raising issues, resulting in a more cautious and uncertain overall picture than seen in SPCB staff.

## **Sub-group analysis**

Across MSP staff sub-groups, the broad shape of responses is similar, but there are some clear differences in information and know-how: agreement is higher among those aged 45+ and with five years or more of service, and among constituency/regional staff, across

induction/session information and practical understanding (zero-tolerance, policies, advice/report routes). Confidence in the system is generally low but varies by group: younger, newer and Holyrood-based staff report lower confidence and more uncertainty, while 45+ and constituency/regional staff are more confident (though also more polarised). On dignity/respect perceptions, totals are similar but 45+ tend to choose 'strongly agree' more often. For speaking up and leaders acting, totals are similar across groups, but the 45+ and five years or more groups are more likely to 'strongly agree', Holyrood-based staff show more 'neither/don't know' responses, and constituency/regional show more strong disagreement.

## **Free-text responses**

Across both free-text questions, MSP staff describe a workplace culture shaped by employment-based power dynamics, inconsistent Member behaviour and variable experiences between offices. Induction and access to information are also inconsistent, with several staff saying they received little or no onboarding and struggle to find out what applies to them. Experiences vary widely: some staff feel valued and supported by their MSPs, while others describe volatile or dismissive environments. Overall, the issue is less the absence of good practice and more the lack of confidence that it is applied consistently across MSP offices.

Alongside this, a small number of respondents highlight inappropriate or harmful behaviour by some MSPs, combined with a lack of visible action from party leadership, which reinforces a sense of a two-tier culture and weak accountability. One respondent reported hearing about sexual harassment, and one reported witnessing sexual assault. Reporting concerns is often seen as risky, particularly when the MSP is the source of the problem, with staff fearing job loss, political repercussions or being dismissed as disloyal. As a result, they call for independent and anonymous reporting routes and clearer, more proactive communication about support.

## **Trends over time**

### **SPCB staff**

A comparison with a 2021 SPCB staff survey suggests some broad shifts in awareness, confidence and perceptions of support, though differences in survey questions limit direct comparison for several questions. Awareness of how to access advice has increased substantially (57% to 81%), while awareness of policies is similar but with more negative responses than in 2021. Confidence in the adequacy of policies has decreased, with fewer confident responses and more negative views.

Confidence in knowing how to report incidents has improved slightly (71% to 76%), while confidence that reports would be taken seriously, and confidence in challenging inappropriate behaviour, remain largely unchanged. Overall, the findings point to stronger practical awareness and advice-seeking, but reduced confidence in the adequacy of existing policies, with limited change in perceptions of wider organisational culture.

## **MSP staff**

There are very limited data on MSP staff experiences, with the last survey carried out in 2018, but some broad contrasts can be observed despite differences in survey questions. Confidence in knowing how to report incidents has dropped from 77% in 2018 to 61% in 2026, while confidence that reports would be taken seriously has fallen to less than half of respondents (47% in 2026, compared with 68–79% in 2018 depending on the behaviour described). Over the same period, the proportion saying they were not confident reports would be taken seriously has more than doubled, rising from around 12–22% in 2018 to 43% in 2026.

Taken together, these figures indicate a substantial deterioration in MSP staff confidence in reporting processes and outcomes compared with 2018.

## **Comparisons between groups**

### **Information Availability and Policy Awareness**

Across Q1-Q6, SPCB and MSP staff show the same overall pattern of responses but with consistently different levels of agreement and disagreement. For induction information, agreement is higher among SPCB staff (40%) than MSP staff (30%), and MSP staff show notably more disagreement (53% compared with 33%). For information received during the parliamentary session, agreement levels are broadly similar (SPCB 58%, MSP 51%) but MSP staff again show higher disagreement (28% vs 22%). Both groups show high awareness of the Parliament's zero tolerance approach, though SPCB staff are stronger on this measure (86% vs 73%), with MSP staff showing a higher proportion of disagreement (18% vs 6%).

Differences are most marked in knowledge based questions. For understanding the underpinning policies and procedures, 68% of SPCB staff agree compared with 43% of MSP staff, while MSP staff show far higher disagreement (40% vs 16%). A similar pattern appears for knowing how to access advice, with 82% of SPCB staff agreeing compared with 64% of MSP staff, who again show higher disagreement (22% vs 11%). The gap is also clear for knowing how to report concerns: 77% of SPCB staff agree, compared with 62% of MSP staff; disagreement among MSP staff (26%) is double that of SPCB staff (13%). Overall, while SPCB and MSP staff respond in broadly similar ways across the question set, MSP staff consistently show lower agreement and higher disagreement, particularly in relation to clarity of policies and practical reporting and advice routes.

### **Confidence in Policies/Reporting**

Across Q7-Q9, while the overall structure of responses is similar (i.e., the same ordering of response categories), SPCB staff consistently report substantially higher confidence than MSP staff in the adequacy of policies and in how concerns would be handled, with confidence consistently and substantially lower among MSP staff.

In regard to policy adequacy, 54% of SPCB staff feel confident, compared with just 28% of MSP staff. MSP staff are also more likely to report they do not feel confident (56% vs 36% among SPCB staff). A similar pattern appears in confidence a report would be taken seriously, where 64% of SPCB staff feel confident compared with 47% of MSP staff, and

MSP staff again show more low confidence responses (42% vs 25%). The pattern continues for confidence in being adequately supported if reporting: 63% of SPCB staff feel confident compared with 39% of MSP staff, while low confidence sits at 28% among SPCB staff and 53% among MSP staff.

## **Culture and Behaviour**

Across Q11-Q13, SPCB and MSP staff show broadly similar results: for feeling valued by employer), 80% of SPCB staff agree, compared with 75% of MSP staff; however, MSP staff show a higher proportion strongly agreeing (63% vs 41%). Agreement in feeling valued by team is high in both groups (92% for MSP staff vs 90% for SPCB), and feeling supported and connected is also very similar (SPCB 86%, MSP 83%).

For Q14-Q15, the pattern becomes more distinct. In regard to being treated with dignity, courtesy and respect, both groups agree in large numbers, but MSP staff report slightly lower agreement (82% for SPCB vs 73% MSP staff), and MSP staff show more polarisation with 8% strongly disagreeing vs 2% in SPCB. Confidence in speaking up is lower among MSP staff (51%) than SPCB staff (60%), and MSP staff show higher strong disagreement (20% vs 12%). On confidence leaders will challenge inappropriate behaviour, agreement is largely consistent (58% for SPCB staff vs 61% for MSP staff).

## **Comparison of free-text responses**

Across both groups, staff describe positive local experiences; SPCB staff often report supportive teams and constructive managers, while many MSP staff highlight strong relationships with their MSP and Head of Office. However, the cultural challenges differ in important ways. For SPCB staff, the focus is on improving consistency, clarity and independent ways to raise concerns early, alongside more visible leadership follow-through and clearer expectations for Members. In contrast, MSP staff describe a culture shaped by employment-based power dynamics, where raising concerns can feel personally risky because the MSP is the employer, and where party-level inaction and widely variable office environments create a sense of a “lottery” of experience. While good practice exists in both groups, MSP staff express lower confidence in consistency and accountability, whereas SPCB staff stress the need for system-wide improvements to ensure fair, safe and early resolution of concerns.

## **Comparison of trends over time**

Looking at trends over time, overall, SPCB staff show a mixed picture, with improved practical awareness but continuing uncertainty about the strength of policies and little shift in cultural perceptions. By contrast, MSP staff show a clear and much more negative direction of travel, with confidence in reporting processes and outcomes having declined sharply. In short, while SPCB staff report incremental change - some positive, some negative - MSP staff show a substantial loss of trust in how concerns would be handled.

## Methods

This section outlines the background to and purpose of the Dignity at Work Arrangements survey and the survey methods, including the sample, ethics, data analysis and limitations.

### Purpose of the Survey

The Inclusive Parliament Review was designed to ensure that everyone working at, or for, the Parliament has a voice in the future design and delivery of facilities, policies and services. This allows the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body (SPCB) to meet people's needs and ensures it fulfils its respective legal responsibilities, as employers and service providers, and helps it to deliver an inclusive and welcoming environment.

As part of this, the SPCB is reviewing the Dignity at Work arrangements to ensure they:

1. Reflect best practice and remain fully aligned with the Scottish Parliament's commitment to foster a dignified, respectful, and courteous culture for all who work and visit Parliament, in line with the:
  - [SPCB's Values](#) and the [Code of Conduct](#) which apply to its staff; and
  - [Nolan Principles in Public Life](#) which apply to all holders of public office, including Members and the [Code of Conduct for MSPs](#); and
2. Support the SPCB, Members and Parliamentary Group Pools, as employers, to take a preventative approach to bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment and misconduct in line with the new duties for employers under the:
  - [Worker Protection \(Amendment of Equality Act 2010\) 2023](#); and
  - [Employment Rights Act 2025](#).

To inform the review, all staff employed by the SPCB and all MSP staff were invited to participate by completing an internal survey that sought anonymous and confidential views on existing policies, procedures and guidance.

The survey of SPCB and MSP staff, along with anonymous and confidential feedback from the Scottish Parliament's Independent Support and Advocacy Service, and individual meetings with staff and Members, are being used to consult, gather feedback and inform the review.

### Survey Design and Delivery

The Dignity at Work Arrangements survey questionnaire was developed by the Organisational Development and Colleague Experience Team at the Scottish Parliament in consultation with representatives from trade unions representing SPCB and MSP staff. The survey sought anonymous and confidential views on two areas:

- **Policies and Procedures** - clarity, accessibility and confidence in using policies, guidance and reporting routes.
- **Culture and Behaviours** - perceptions of dignity and respect, and experiences related to bullying and harassment.

To capture quantitative data and allow people to share their own perspectives, the questionnaire used both closed questions and optional free-text questions.

Demographic and employment-arrangement questions were included to understand respondent diversity and to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) to understand how policies and practices affect employees with protected characteristics, in order to identify gaps, address discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. These included a 'prefer not to say' option for sensitive characteristics.

The survey was conducted via Microsoft Forms and was live for a fourteen-day window between 23 January and 5 February 2026. All SPCB and MSP staff were invited to complete the survey on a voluntary basis. The survey was communicated via a variety of methods to maximise reach, including through all-staff emails, the Intranet and affiliated systems and onsite promotion.

## Response Rate and Profile

Overall, the survey response rate, by staffing group, was:

- 174 SPCB staff, a response rate of 27%
- 49 MSP staff, a response rate of 7%.

It is recognised that surveys on this subject matter will often have a lower response rate than a standard staff experience survey given the sensitive subject matter. For comparison, a [2018 survey of UK civil servants](#) on Bullying, Harassment and Misconduct had a response rate of around 4%, and a [2018 survey of MPs, Peers and parliamentary staff](#) to inform the Dame Laura Cox inquiry on the Bullying and Harassment of House of Common staff had a response rate of around 17%. By contrast, the [2018 survey on Sexual Harassment and Sexist Behaviour in the Scottish Parliament](#) had a much higher response rate, at 81% for SPCB staff and 76% for MSP staff.

The sample profile is outlined in Tables 1-4. Across both staff groups, the majority of respondents were women (SPCB staff 61%; MSP staff 69%).<sup>1</sup> Half of SPCB staff (50%) had worked in the Scottish Parliament for over 10 years, whereas for MSP staff, over half (60%) had worked at the Scottish Parliament for 5 years or less. Over half (54%) of SPCB staff were aged 45 years and over, whereas more than half of MSP staff (57%) were under 45 years old. Among MSP staff, 45% worked mainly at Holyrood, with 37% working mainly in constituency or regional offices, and about a fifth remotely (18%).

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<sup>1</sup> For reporting, sex is presented as man/woman. The survey also asked whether respondents identify as non-binary and/or trans; however, data from sub-group analysis are reported publicly only where all categories in the variable have  $\geq 15$  respondents to protect anonymity, and the number of staff identifying as non-binary and/or trans is very small.

As the sample was self-selected, it is subject to selection bias, as participation is more likely among individuals with strong views, while others may opt out due to low perceived relevance or concerns about anonymity given the sensitive topic.

**Table 1: Response Profile - Age**

Age	SPCB staff (%)	MSP staff (%)
16-24	0%	6%
25-44	36%	51%
45+	54%	37%
Prefer not to say	10%	6%
Base (number)	174	49

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

**Table 2: Response Profile - Sex**

Sex	SPCB staff (%)	MSP staff (%)*
Male	28%	24%
Female	61%	69%
Prefer not to say	12%	6%
Base (number)	173	49

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

\*Total less than 100% due to single blank response.

**Table 3: Response Profile – Duration of work at the Scottish Parliament**

Duration of work at SP	SPCB staff (%)	MSP staff (%)
Less than 2 years	8%	27%
2-5 years	16%	33%
5-10 years	26%	29%
More than 10 years	50%	12%
Base (number)	174	49

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

**Table 4: Response Profile – Main Location of Work (MSP staff only)**

Main location of work	MSP staff (%)
Constituency or regional office	37%
Holyrood	45%
Remotely	18%
Base (number)	49

Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Confidentiality, Anonymity and Ethics

Protecting anonymity was central to the design, given the sensitivity of dignity at work topics and the small size of some staff groups. This included:

- **No identifying metadata** - such as names, emails or IP addresses were collected. Respondents were asked not to include identifying details in free-text comments.
- **Public reporting threshold** - to ensure that respondents could not become identifiable by anonymous data being combined with publicly available information, sub-group analysis is reported publicly only where all categories in the variable have  $\geq 15$  respondents; otherwise, it is reported at a higher level. This conservative threshold reflects the topic's sensitivity and local-knowledge risks.

Ethically, the data will be used internally only to inform the Inclusive Parliament Review and to identify where further engagement or evidence-gathering may be needed. These are considered at high level internally in line with [EHRC guidance](#). Data will not be used for team or office-level performance assessment or prevalence estimates.

These safeguards reflect the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)'s risk-based [anonymisation guidance](#) and are consistent with the ICO's emphasis on purpose limitation and identifiability risk management.

For transparency and trust, we publish what we can safely publish (subject to the rules above). This establishes a basis for accountability by documenting progress over time.

## Data Analysis

**Quantitative analysis.** Closed question results were summarised descriptively by a small project team in Organisational Development and Colleague Experience and People and Partnering Team. Sub-group analysis is reported publicly only where all categories in the variable have  $\geq 15$  respondents; otherwise, data are reported at a higher level. As such, sub-group analysis is reported for the following groups: sex, age and duration of employment for SPCB staff; and age, duration of employment and main location of work for

MSP staff. Because of the small sample sizes, absolute numbers are provided alongside percentages.

**Qualitative analysis.** Free text comments were reviewed using a structured thematic approach (open coding, consolidation into themes, and light frequency scanning to understand salience). Some responses contribute to several themes. The project team was supported in the qualitative analysis by one researcher in the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), who reviewed cleaned free-text responses on their own for each staff group (MSP staff and SPCB staff), separate from any demographic or other survey data.

## Limitations

The survey was voluntary and self-selected, so the results are indicative rather than representative and should not be used to generalise to all staff or to estimate prevalence. They can, however, be used to highlight themes and issues, identify recurring concerns, and indicate where further listening or action may be needed. For the reasons set out under Confidentiality, Anonymity and Ethics - including small numbers, the sensitivity of the topic and the workplace context - safe-release rules limit data disaggregation.

Percentages should also be interpreted with care, as they can be volatile when numbers are small. For that reason, absolute numbers are reported alongside, and the emphasis in reporting is on patterns and themes - to be considered alongside other evidence gathered through the wider review - rather than on precise percentages.

## SPCB Staff – Key Themes

### Policies & Procedures

This section addresses the findings from qualitative and quantitative data gathered on views on existing policies, procedures and guidance, including how accessible and clear these are to the SPCB staff group.

The key subject areas within the Policies and Procedures section of the survey were:

- Information availability and policy awareness
- Knowledge of process and advice availability
- Confidence in policies and reporting
- Open-ended feedback – potential improvements and insights.

### Information Availability and Policy Awareness

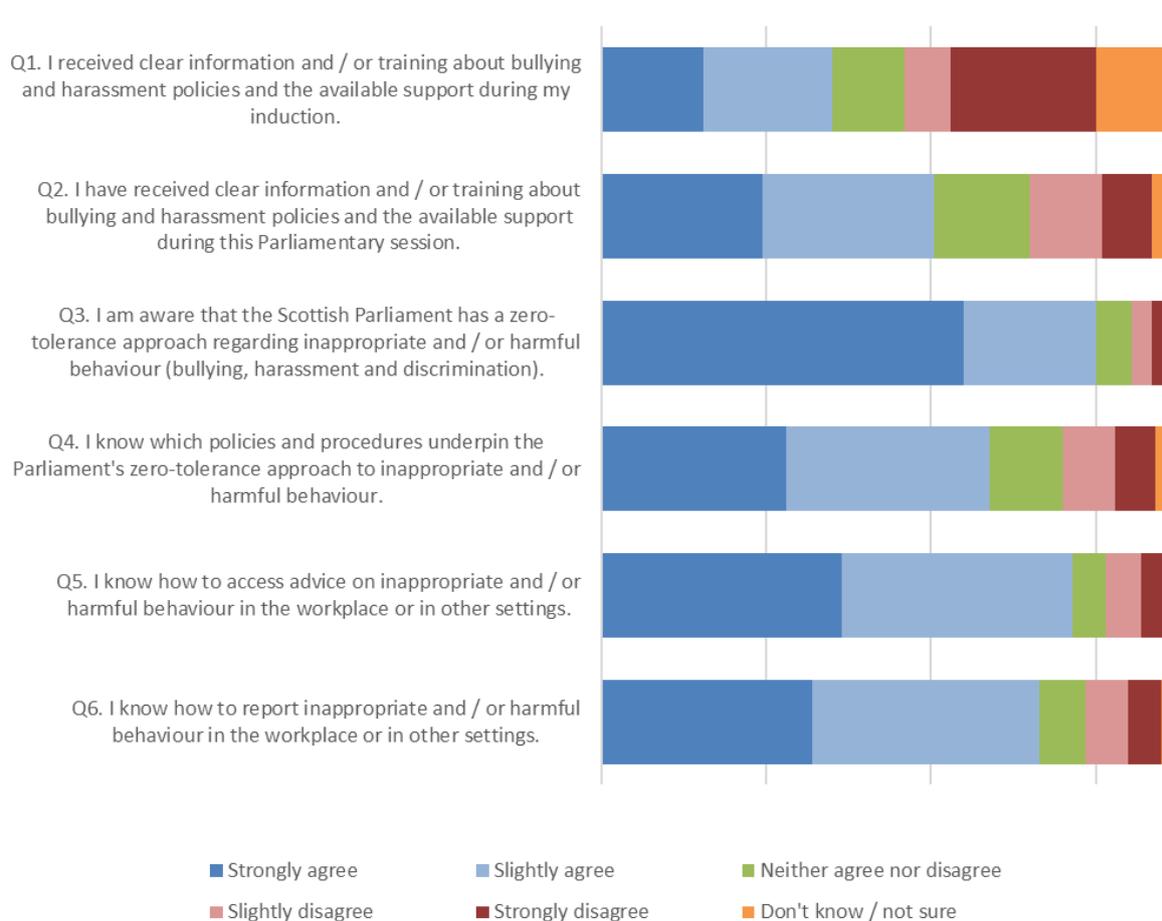
Within the first sub-section of the survey, Questions 1-6 asked about the information and understanding respondents had in relation to bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour policies.

The results for SPCB staff (see Fig.1) show clear patterns in participants' awareness and confidence around bullying, harassment, and inappropriate behaviour policies. Awareness of the Parliament's zero-tolerance approach (Q3) is strong, with 86% agreeing - including 63% strongly - indicating that the overarching cultural message is well embedded. However, fewer respondents feel confident about the specific policies and procedures underpinning this approach (Q4), with agreement dropping to 68% and a notable 13% selecting 'neither agree nor disagree', suggesting a degree of uncertainty about the detail rather than the principle.

Induction (Q1) appears to be the weakest point, with only 40% agreeing they received clear information at that stage and a relatively high proportion either disagreeing (33%) or unsure (14%). In contrast, understanding improves substantially during the parliamentary session (Q2), where 58% agree they have received clear information or training.

Confidence in accessing support and reporting mechanisms is generally high. For advice-seeking (Q5), 82% agree they know how to access guidance, and for reporting (Q6), 77% express confidence in how to raise concerns, although slightly more respondents disagree here compared with advice routes.

Overall, the data suggests a strong understanding of zero-tolerance expectations and good awareness of support pathways, with comparatively more mixed responses in relation to induction information and understanding of detailed procedures.



	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	18% (31)	22% (39)	13% (22)	8% (14)	25% (44)	14% (24)
Q2	28% (49)	30% (52)	17% (29)	13% (22)	9% (15)	4% (7)
Q3	63% (110)	23% (40)	6% (11)	3% (6)	3% (5)	1% (2)
Q4	32% (56)	36% (62)	13% (22)	9% (16)	7% (12)	3% (6)
Q5	42% (73)	40% (70)	6% (10)	6% (11)	5% (8)	1% (2)
Q6	37% (64)	40% (69)	8% (14)	7% (13)	6% (10)	2% (4)

Fig 1. – SPCB Staff Responses: Information Availability and Policy Awareness – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 174. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

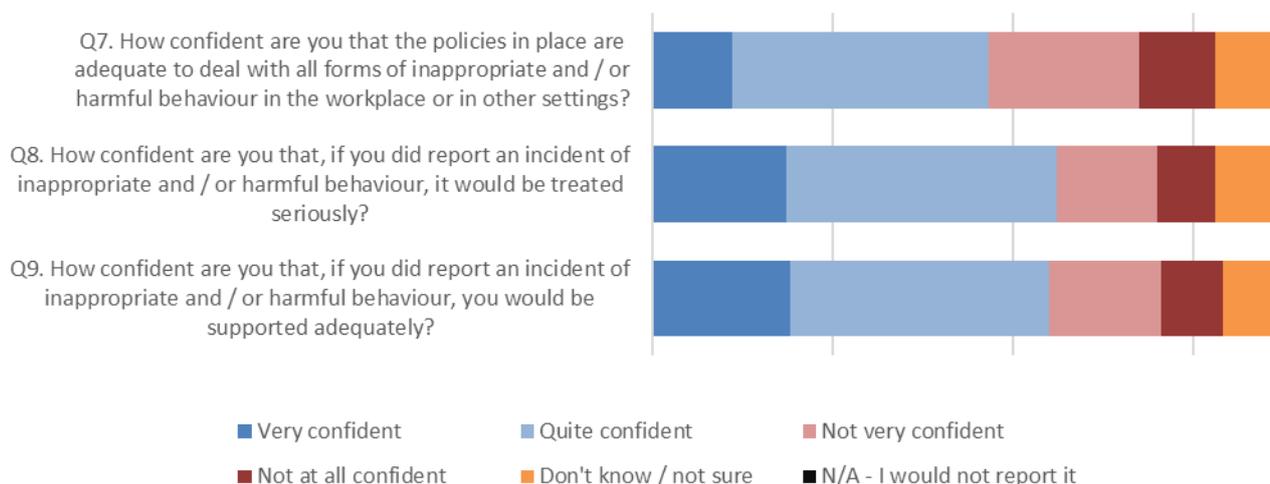
## Confidence in Policies/Reporting

In the second sub-section, Questions 7-9 asked about confidence in how the system would function if inappropriate behaviour were reported.

The results (see Fig.2) for the three confidence questions indicate that a majority of SPCB respondents report higher confidence across all items, with a smaller but notable minority reporting low confidence and around one in ten unsure. For confidence that the policies are adequate (Q7), 54% are very or quite confident (13% very; 41% quite), 36% report low confidence (24% not very; 12% not at all), and 10% are unsure. Confidence that a reported

incident would be treated seriously (Q8) is higher: 64% are very or quite confident (21% very; 43% quite), 25% report low confidence (16% not very; 9% not at all), 10% are unsure, and 1% say they would not report. Confidence in being adequately supported if reporting (Q9) is similarly positive: 63% are very or quite confident (22% very; 41% quite), 28% report low confidence (18% not very; 10% not at all), and 9% are unsure.

Overall, confidence is highest for how reports would be handled (Q8) and for receiving support (Q9), and somewhat lower for policy adequacy (Q7), though still a majority.



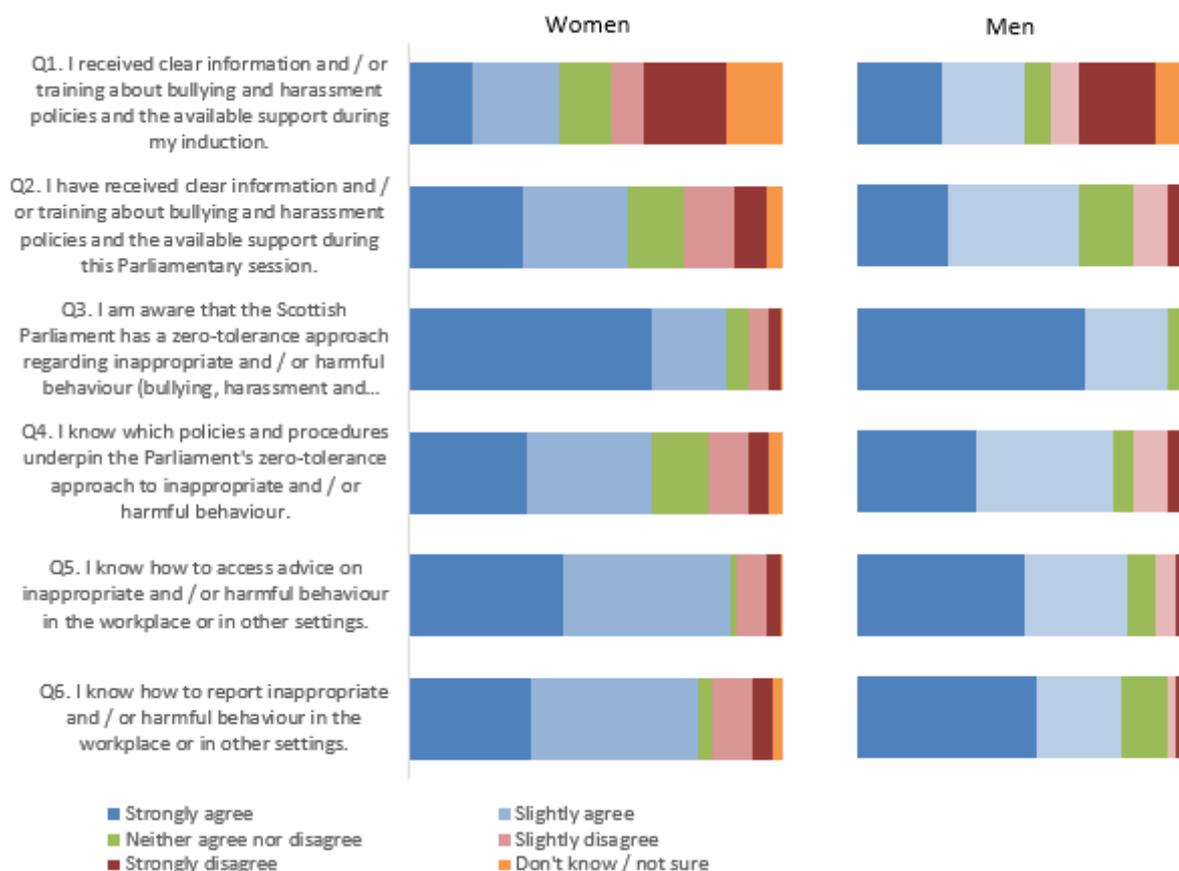
	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	13% (22)	41% (71)	24% (42)	12% (21)	10% (18)	0% (0)
Q8	21% (37)	43% (75)	16% (28)	9% (16)	10% (17)	1% (1)
Q9	22% (38)	41% (72)	18% (31)	10% (17)	9% (16)	0% (0)

Fig 2. – SPCB Staff Responses – Confidence in Policies/Reporting – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 174.. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Sub-group analysis

### Sex

Overall, for SPCB staff, the patterns across women and men are broadly similar for Q1-Q6 (see Fig.3), with both groups showing highest agreement for awareness of the zero-tolerance approach and knowing how to access advice, and lower agreement around induction information and understanding of detailed policies. Men tend to report slightly higher levels of agreement on several questions, particularly around knowing how to report concerns (Q6), while women show slightly higher levels of uncertainty, especially in relation to induction information (Q1). Differences are generally modest, and both groups follow the same overall pattern of responses.



Women:

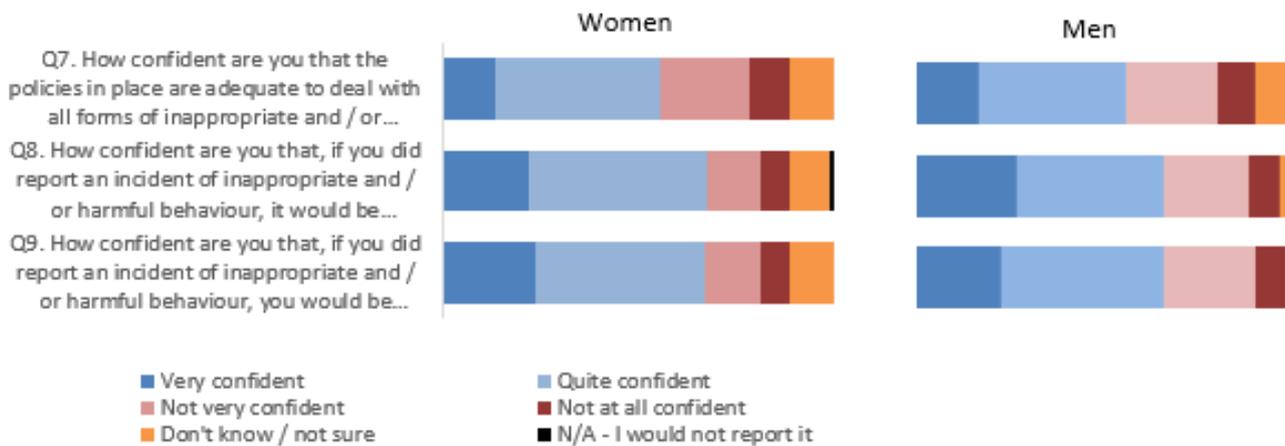
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	17% (18)	23% (24)	14% (15)	9% (9)	22% (23)	15% (16)
Q2	30% (32)	28% (29)	15% (16)	13% (14)	9% (9)	5% (5)
Q3	65% (68)	20% (21)	6% (6)	6% (6)	3% (3)	1% (1)
Q4	31% (33)	33% (35)	15% (16)	10% (11)	6% (6)	4% (4)
Q5	41% (43)	45% (47)	2% (2)	8% (8)	4% (4)	1% (1)
Q6	32% (34)	45% (47)	4% (4)	10% (11)	6% (6)	3% (3)

Men:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	25% (12)	25% (12)	8% (4)	8% (4)	23% (11)	10% (5)
Q2	27% (13)	40% (19)	17% (8)	10% (5)	6% (3)	0% (0)
Q3	69% (33)	25% (12)	4% (2)	0% (0)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q4	35% (17)	42% (20)	6% (3)	10% (5)	6% (3)	0% (0)
Q5	50% (24)	31% (15)	8% (4)	6% (3)	4% (2)	0% (0)
Q6	54% (26)	25% (12)	15% (7)	2% (1)	4% (2)	0% (0)

Fig 3. – SPCB Staff Responses: Information Availability and Policy Awareness by sex – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 105 women, 48 men. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Across Q7-Q9 (see Fig.4), responses from women and men are broadly consistent, with very similar proportions reporting high confidence in the adequacy of policies, how reports would be handled, and the support they would receive. The only minor differences relate to uncertainty: women show slightly higher ‘don’t know’ responses, particularly for Q9, while men tend to choose a response category rather than expressing uncertainty.



Women:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	13% (14)	42% (44)	23% (24)	10% (11)	11% (12)	0% (0)
Q8	22% (23)	46% (48)	13% (14)	8% (8)	10% (11)	1% (1)
Q9	24% (25)	43% (45)	14% (15)	8% (8)	11% (12)	0% (0)

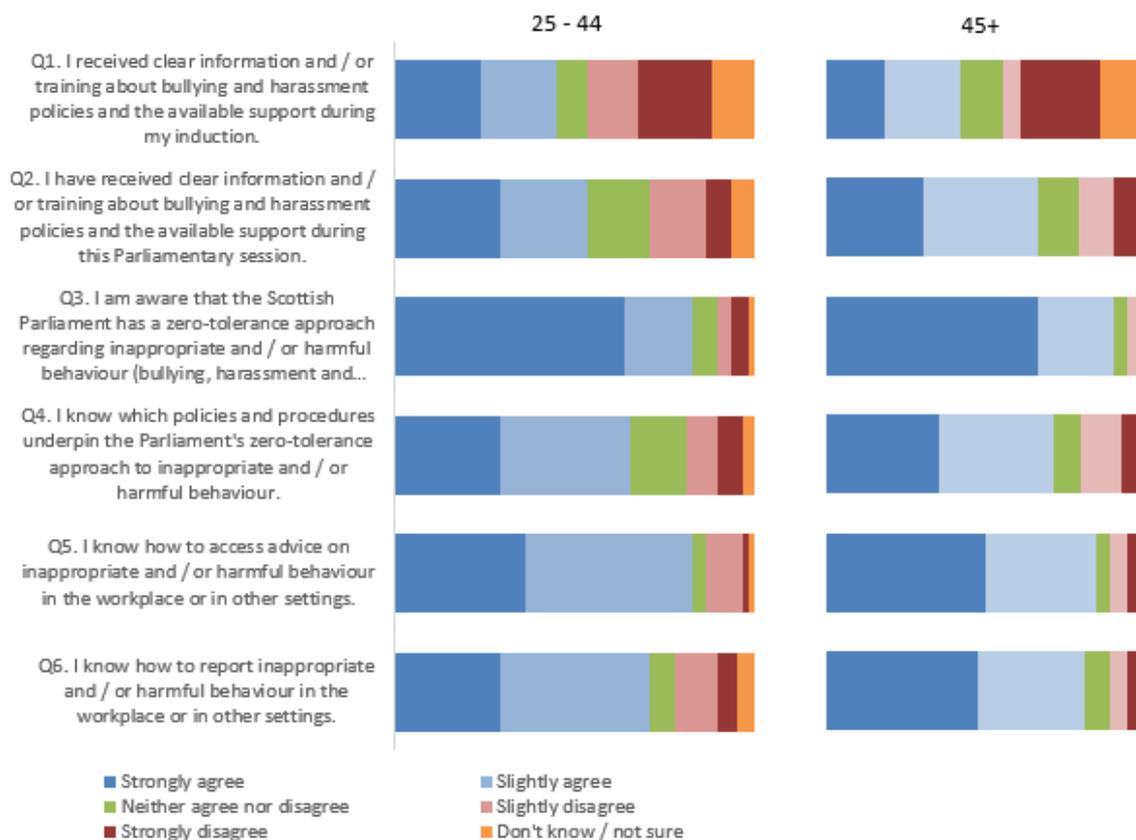
Men:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	17% (8)	40% (19)	25% (12)	10% (5)	8% (4)	0% (0)
Q8	27% (13)	40% (19)	23% (11)	8% (4)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q9	23% (11)	44% (21)	25% (12)	8% (4)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Fig 4. – SPCB Staff Responses: Confidence in Policies/Reporting by sex – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 105 women, 48 men. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

### Age

For SPCB staff, the two age groups show very similar response patterns across Q1-Q6 (see Fig.5) related to information availability and policy awareness. Any differences are modest, with the 45+ group tending to show slightly higher agreement on several questions, especially in relation to session-specific information and training, and on knowing how to report concerns. The broad structure of responses, however, remains consistent across both groups.



25 to 44:

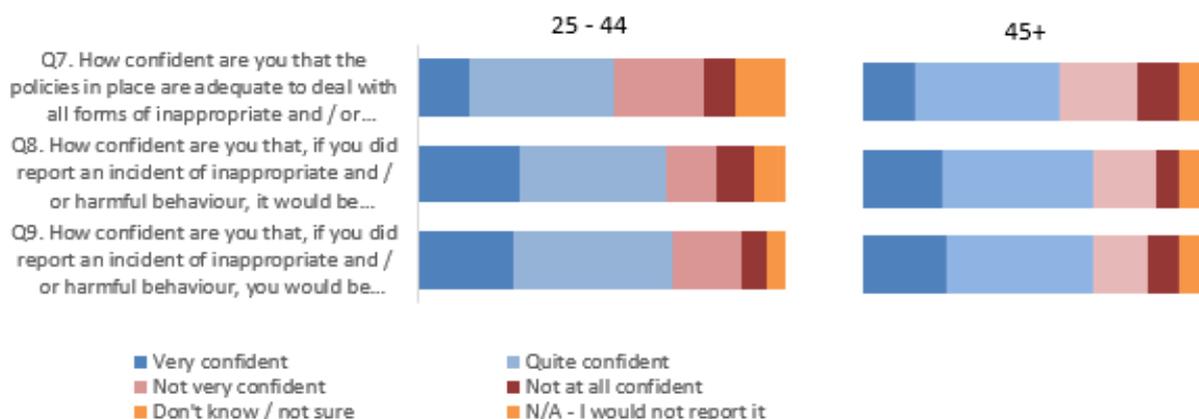
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	24% (14)	21% (12)	9% (5)	14% (8)	21% (12)	12% (7)
Q2	29% (17)	24% (14)	17% (10)	16% (9)	7% (4)	7% (4)
Q3	64% (37)	19% (11)	7% (4)	3% (2)	5% (3)	2% (1)
Q4	29% (17)	36% (21)	16% (9)	9% (5)	7% (4)	3% (2)
Q5	36% (21)	47% (27)	3% (2)	10% (6)	2% (1)	2% (1)
Q6	29% (17)	41% (24)	7% (4)	12% (7)	5% (3)	5% (3)

45-plus:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	18% (16)	24% (21)	13% (12)	6% (5)	25% (22)	15% (13)
Q2	30% (27)	36% (32)	12% (11)	11% (10)	9% (8)	1% (1)
Q3	66% (59)	24% (21)	4% (4)	4% (4)	1% (1)	0% (0)
Q4	35% (31)	36% (32)	9% (8)	12% (11)	6% (5)	2% (2)
Q5	49% (44)	35% (31)	4% (4)	6% (5)	6% (5)	0% (0)
Q6	47% (42)	34% (30)	8% (7)	6% (5)	6% (5)	0% (0)

Fig 5. – SPCB Staff Responses: Information Availability and Policy Awareness by age – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 58 - 16-44; 89 - 45 plus. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Across Q7-Q9 (see Fig.6) on confidence in policies and reporting, the two age groups again show very similar confidence levels, with only small variations in uncertainty and lower-confidence responses.



25 to 44:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	14% (8)	40% (23)	24% (14)	9% (5)	14% (8)	0% (0)
Q8	28% (16)	40% (23)	14% (8)	10% (6)	7% (4)	2% (1)
Q9	26% (15)	43% (25)	19% (11)	7% (4)	5% (3)	0% (0)

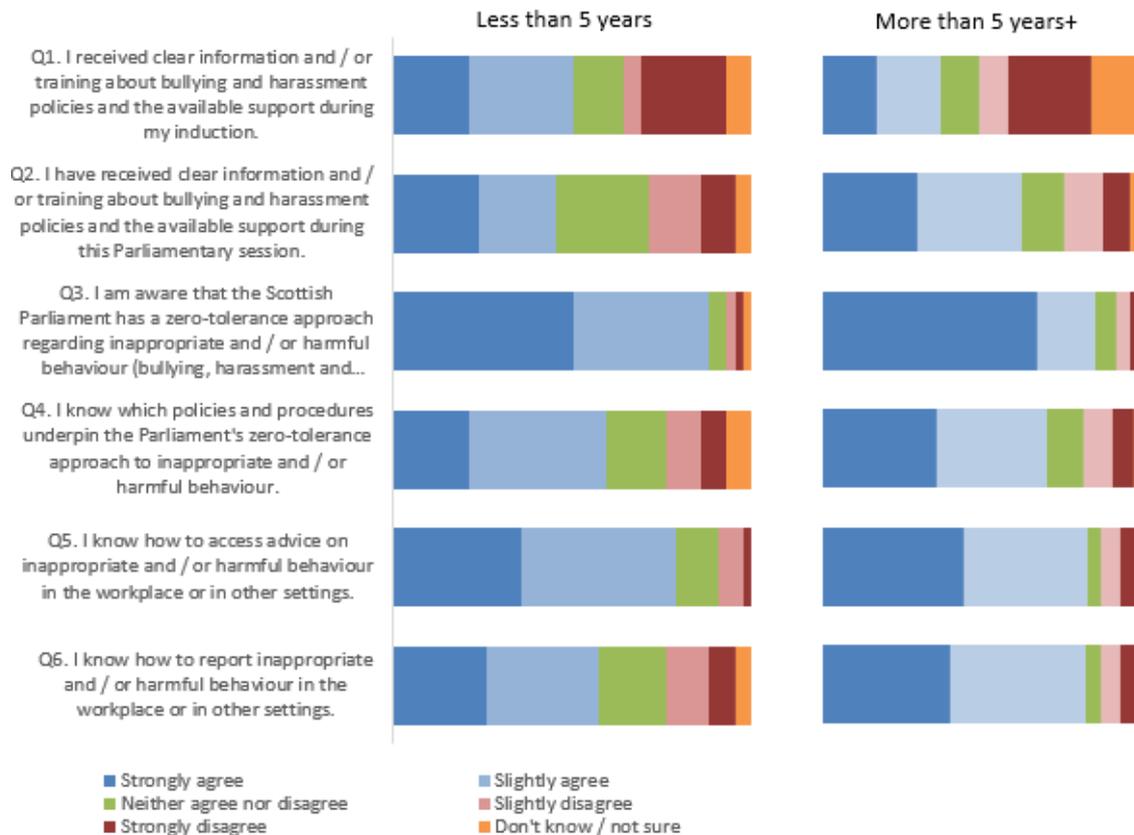
45-plus:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	15% (13)	42% (37)	22% (20)	12% (11)	9% (8)	0% (0)
Q8	22% (20)	44% (39)	18% (16)	7% (6)	9% (8)	0% (0)
Q9	24% (21)	43% (38)	16% (14)	9% (8)	9% (8)	0% (0)

Fig 6. – SPCB Staff Responses: Confidence in Policies/Reporting by age – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 58 - 16-44; 89 - 45 plus. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

### Duration

When broken down by duration of employment (less than 5 years vs. more than 5 years), SPCB staff show broadly similar patterns overall on Q1-Q6 (see Fig.7), but there are notable differences in three areas. For Q1 (induction information), agreement is higher among those with less than five years (50%) compared with those with more than five years (37%), who also show a higher proportion of “don’t know”. For Q2 (information during the parliamentary session), both groups show majority agreement, but it is more mixed among newer staff (53% agree vs 66% in the longer-serving group). The biggest difference appears in Q6 (knowing how to report concerns), where agreement is much higher among longer-serving staff (82%) than newer staff (57%).



Less than five years:

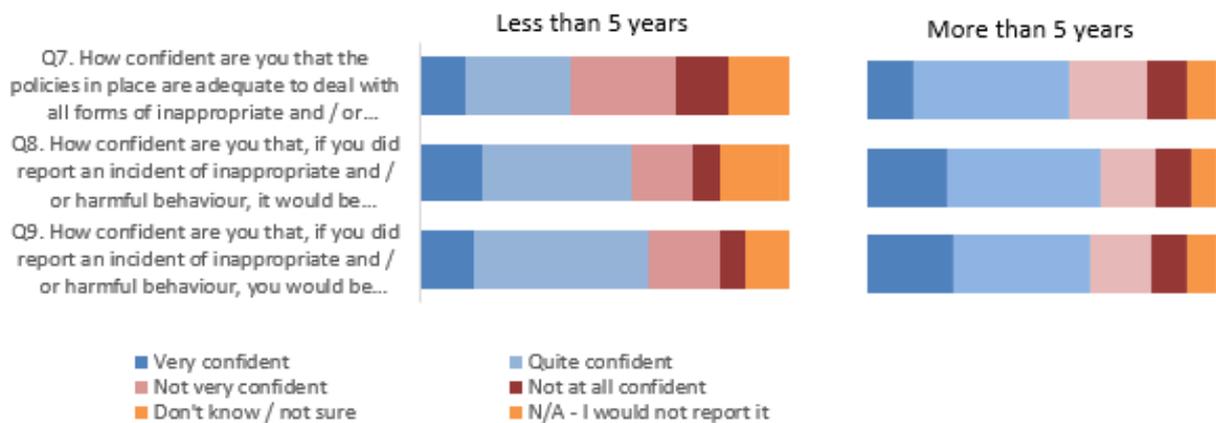
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	21% (9)	29% (12)	14% (6)	5% (2)	24% (10)	7% (3)
Q2	24% (10)	21% (9)	26% (11)	14% (6)	10% (4)	5% (2)
Q3	50% (21)	38% (16)	5% (2)	2% (1)	2% (1)	2% (1)
Q4	21% (9)	38% (16)	17% (7)	10% (4)	7% (3)	7% (3)
Q5	36% (15)	43% (18)	12% (5)	7% (3)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q6	26% (11)	31% (13)	19% (8)	12% (5)	7% (3)	5% (2)

More than five years:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	17% (22)	20% (27)	12% (16)	9% (12)	26% (34)	16% (21)
Q2	30% (39)	33% (43)	14% (18)	12% (16)	8% (11)	4% (5)
Q3	67% (89)	18% (24)	7% (9)	4% (5)	3% (4)	1% (1)
Q4	36% (47)	35% (46)	11% (15)	9% (12)	7% (9)	2% (3)
Q5	44% (58)	39% (52)	4% (5)	6% (8)	5% (7)	2% (2)
Q6	40% (53)	42% (56)	5% (6)	6% (8)	5% (7)	2% (2)

Fig 7. – SPCB Staff Responses: Information Availability and Policy Awareness by duration – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 42 - less than 5 years; 132 - more than 5 years. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Across Q7-Q9 on confidence in policies and reporting (see Fig.8), the two service-length groups show a similar overall pattern, but with some differences in the levels of confidence. Staff with more than five years' service report higher confidence and lower uncertainty that policies are adequate (57% compared to 41%), and higher confidence that a report would be taken seriously (67% compared to 57%).



Less than five years:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	12% (5)	29% (12)	29% (12)	14% (6)	17% (7)	0% (0)
Q8	17% (7)	40% (17)	17% (7)	7% (3)	17% (7)	2% (1)
Q9	14% (6)	48% (20)	19% (8)	7% (3)	12% (5)	0% (0)

More than five years:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	13% (17)	45% (59)	23% (30)	11% (15)	8% (11)	0% (0)
Q8	23% (30)	44% (58)	16% (21)	10% (13)	8% (10)	0% (0)
Q9	24% (32)	39% (52)	17% (23)	11% (14)	8% (11)	0% (0)

Fig 8. – SPCB Staff Responses: Confidence in Policies/Reporting by duration – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 42 - less than 5 years; 132 - more than 5 years. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Suggested Improvements: Free-text Responses

68 SPCB staff answered the free-text question “What improvements can be made to existing policies, reporting mechanisms.” There were four dominant themes (each present in 10-25 responses), in order of weight:

- Knowledge, training and visibility
- Consistency, follow-through and leadership modelling
- Member accountability and power imbalances
- Safe, confidential and independent ways to raise concerns at early stages.

### **Knowledge, training and visibility**

Respondents generally view underlying policies as comprehensive and well-intentioned, but hard to access and navigate; information is perceived as fragmented, lengthy, spread across multiple locations with version control uncertainties, and not always accessible for different needs (including neurodiversity). Respondents ask for centralised, plain-English guidance, short summaries/flowcharts, and visible signposting (e.g. intranet placement, posters, induction).

Alongside this, respondents highlight substantial training needs for staff, managers and Members. These include in-person training on the impact of everyday and lower-level behaviours and building confidence for early conversations, supported by regular refreshers. Respondents also suggested manager capability-building (e.g., how to respond constructively, give feedback), externally benchmarked inclusive-leadership training, and ensuring Members and Members’ staff receive clear behavioural expectations. A very small number raised concerns that “zero tolerance” messaging may obscure distinctions between serious and less serious issues, suggesting a need for proportionality within training.

### **Consistency, follow-through and leadership modelling**

Respondents broadly view policies as sound in principle but uneven in practice. Confidence is undermined by inconsistent application, limited visibility of outcomes, and cases where senior staff are perceived to normalise or tolerate poor behaviour. Experiences are perceived as varying significantly by team and by manager, reinforcing a sense that standards depend on who is involved rather than what occurred. This contributes to caution about reporting and a perception gap between those with supportive managers and those for whom management is part of the problem.

### **Member accountability and power imbalances**

A strong and distinct concern centres on power imbalances when Members are involved. Respondents describe a two-tier system, where similar behaviours are treated differently depending on whether a Member or a staff member is responsible. There is uncertainty about how complaints involving Members are handled, and whether there are clear

behavioural standards and consequences for day-to-day conduct below formal rule breaches. These perceptions suppress confidence and deter reporting, particularly for “lower-level” behaviours that are experienced frequently.

### **Safe, confidential and independent ways to raise concerns at early stages**

Respondents want safer and more accessible ways to raise concerns, especially at the early stages. Many do not feel comfortable approaching their line manager or HR first, particularly where the manager is implicated or where power dynamics mean this is perceived to be unsafe. A recurring barrier is advice to confront the perpetrator first, which is experienced as unsafe and deterring. Staff also want routes that allow them to log concerns without making a formal complaint, and there is strong support for informal, early resolution where appropriate (e.g., HR-facilitated conversations) and for clear bystander guidance and protections.

## **Culture and Behaviour**

This section addresses the findings from qualitative and quantitative data gathered on views on everyday behaviours and working practices that define the parliamentary and team cultures in relation to the SPCB staff group.

The key subject areas within the Culture and Behaviour section of the survey were:

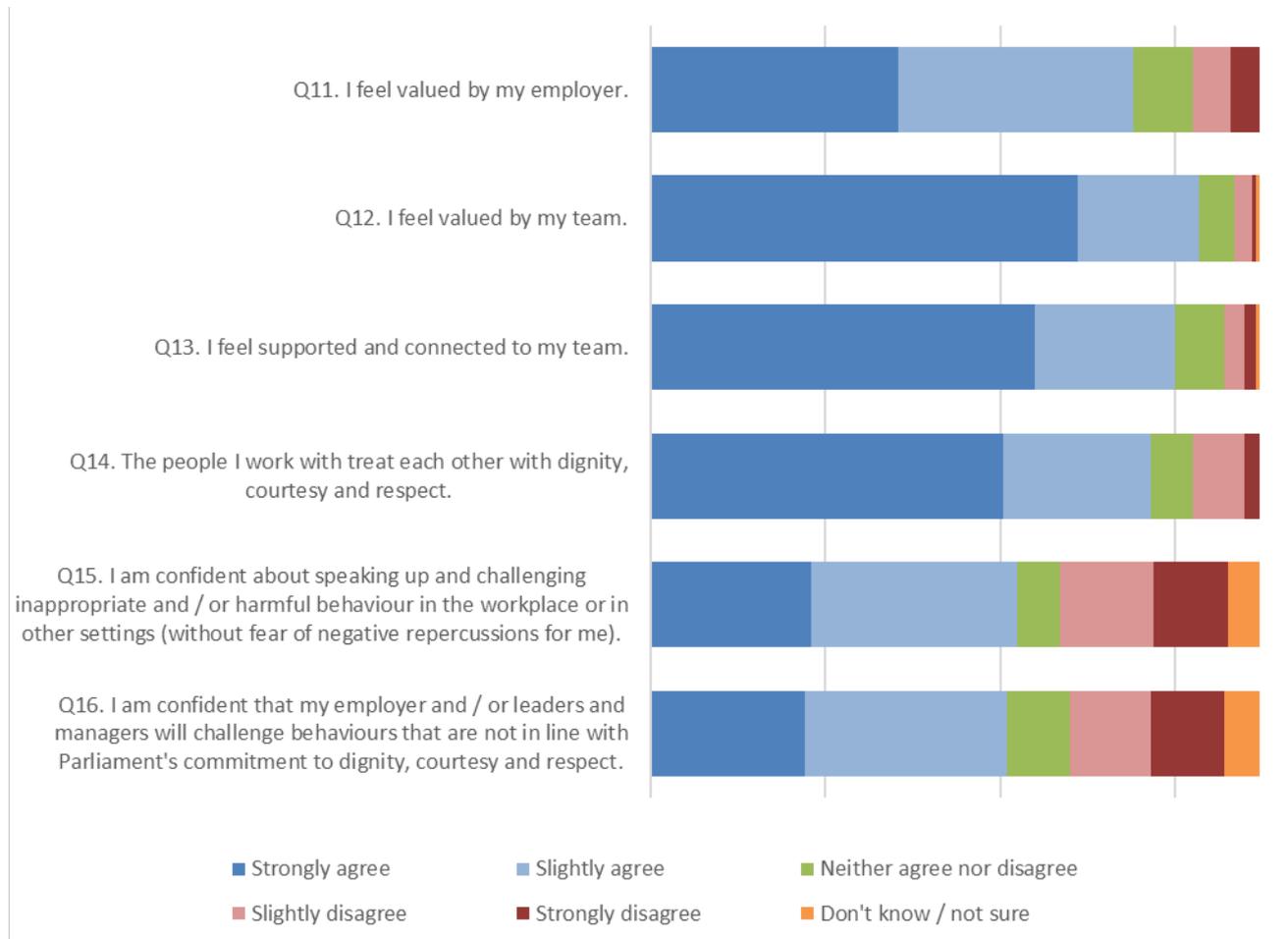
- Value and connectivity with employer and team
- Dignity and respect
- Confidence in reporting and capacity to challenge
- Open-ended feedback – further insights.

Questions 11-16 asked about workplace culture, relationships, and confidence to challenge behaviour.

The results for SPCB staff (see Fig.9) show consistently high levels of agreement on feeling valued and supported within teams. Feeling valued by one’s employer (Q10) receives 80% agreement in total, with 41% strongly agreeing, while only 11% disagree. Feeling valued by the team (Q11) is even stronger, with 90% agreeing - including 70% strongly - and only 4% disagreeing. A similar pattern appears in feeling supported and connected to the team (Q12), where 86% agree and very few disagree. These findings indicate that experiences of value, connection, and support at team level are among the strongest areas in the dataset.

Views on dignity, courtesy, and respect (Q13) also show high agreement, with 82% agreeing that colleagues treat one another respectfully, and 11% disagreeing. Confidence in speaking up about inappropriate behaviour (Q14) is slightly more varied: 82% agree they feel confident challenging behaviour, but 9% disagree. Confidence that employer or leadership will challenge inappropriate behaviour (Q15) is lower than the preceding items. Here, 60% agree, while 28% disagree, and 5% are unsure - representing the highest level of disagreement in this set of questions.

Taken together, the data show strong perceptions of value, support, and respectful behaviour within teams, alongside high levels of personal confidence in speaking up. Confidence in leaders and employers to challenge inappropriate behaviour, while still positive overall, is comparatively weaker, with a larger minority expressing disagreement or uncertainty compared with other questions.



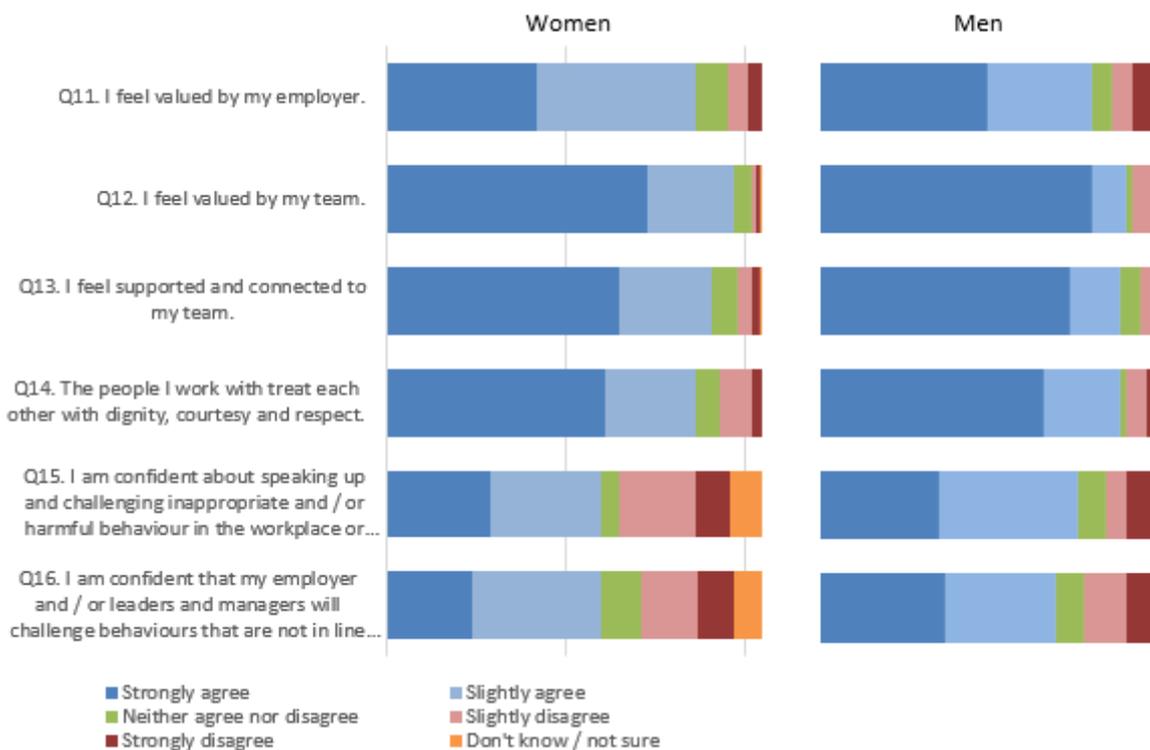
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	41% (71)	39% (67)	10% (17)	6% (11)	5% (8)	0% (0)
Q12	70% (122)	20% (35)	6% (10)	3% (5)	1% (1)	1% (1)
Q13	63% (110)	23% (40)	8% (14)	3% (6)	2% (3)	1% (1)
Q14	58% (101)	24% (42)	7% (12)	9% (15)	2% (4)	0% (0)
Q15	26% (46)	34% (59)	7% (12)	16% (27)	12% (21)	5% (9)
Q16	25% (44)	33% (58)	10% (18)	13% (23)	12% (21)	6% (10)

Fig 9. – SPCB Staff Responses: Culture and Behaviour – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 174. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Sub-group analysis

### Sex

Across Q11-Q16, women and men show broadly similar patterns on feeling valued and on team culture (Q11-Q12) and they also show comparable levels of agreement on feeling supported and connected to their team (Q13) and that people treat each other with dignity, courtesy and respect in their teams (Q14). The main differences appear in confidence-related questions: men report higher confidence in speaking up (Q15: 77% vs 58%); and, more notably, higher confidence that leaders will challenge inappropriate behaviour (Q16: 71% vs 57%). Women also show higher levels of uncertainty, with more 'don't know' responses on Q15 and Q16, whereas men report none. Overall, the groups are similar on team-related items, with clearer gaps emerging around trust in leadership and confidence to challenge behaviour.



Women:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	40% (42)	42% (44)	9% (9)	6% (6)	4% (4)	0% (0)
Q12	70% (73)	23% (24)	5% (5)	1% (1)	1% (1)	1% (1)
Q13	62% (65)	25% (26)	7% (7)	4% (4)	2% (2)	1% (1)
Q14	58% (61)	24% (25)	7% (7)	9% (9)	3% (3)	0% (0)
Q15	28% (29)	30% (31)	5% (5)	20% (21)	10% (10)	9% (9)
Q16	23% (24)	34% (36)	10% (11)	15% (16)	10% (10)	8% (8)

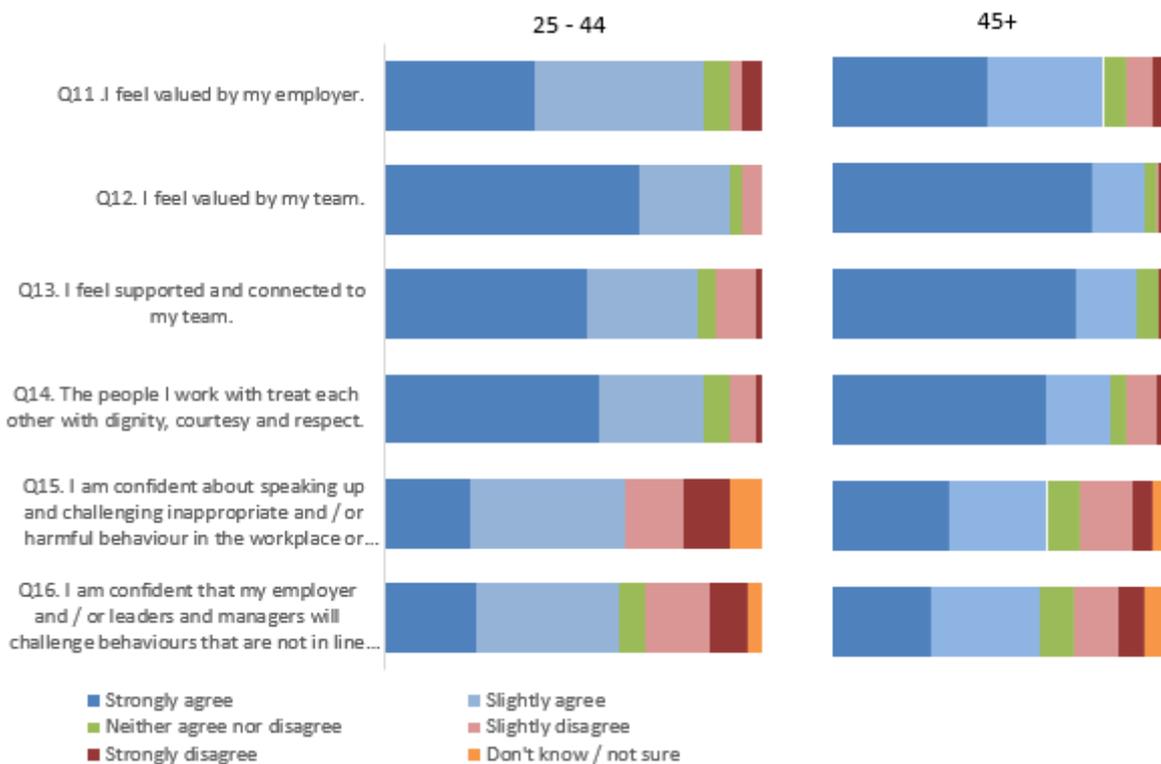
Men:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	50% (24)	31% (15)	6% (3)	6% (3)	6% (3)	0% (0)
Q12	81% (39)	10% (5)	2% (1)	6% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q13	75% (36)	15% (7)	6% (3)	4% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q14	67% (32)	23% (11)	2% (1)	6% (3)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q15	35% (17)	42% (20)	8% (4)	6% (3)	8% (4)	0% (0)
Q16	38% (18)	33% (16)	8% (4)	13% (6)	8% (4)	0% (0)

Fig 10. – SPCB Staff Reponses: Culture and Behaviour by sex – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 105 women, 48 men Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

### Age

Across Q11-Q16 (see Fig.11), the 25-44 and 45+ age groups show broadly consistent patterns, and the direction of results is the same, but the 45+ group is consistently more likely to select 'strongly agree' - especially on team-related items. Q13 (feeling supported and connected) shows the clearest difference in both intensity and totals: 73% 'strongly agree' among 45+ versus 53% for 25-44. Similar (though smaller) patterns appear on Q12 (feeling valued by team) - 78% 'strongly agree' (45+) vs 67% (25-44), and Q14 (dignity, courtesy, respect) - 64% vs 57%. For the confidence items, totals are almost identical but intensity again tilts: Q15 (confidence to speak up) shows 35% 'strongly agree' (45+) vs 22% (25-44).



25 to 44:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	40% (23)	45% (26)	7% (4)	3% (2)	5% (3)	0% (0)
Q12	67% (39)	24% (14)	3% (2)	5% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q13	53% (31)	29% (17)	5% (3)	10% (6)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q14	57% (33)	28% (16)	7% (4)	7% (4)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q15	22% (13)	41% (24)	0% (0)	16% (9)	12% (7)	9% (5)
Q16	24% (14)	38% (22)	7% (4)	17% (10)	10% (6)	3% (2)

45-plus:

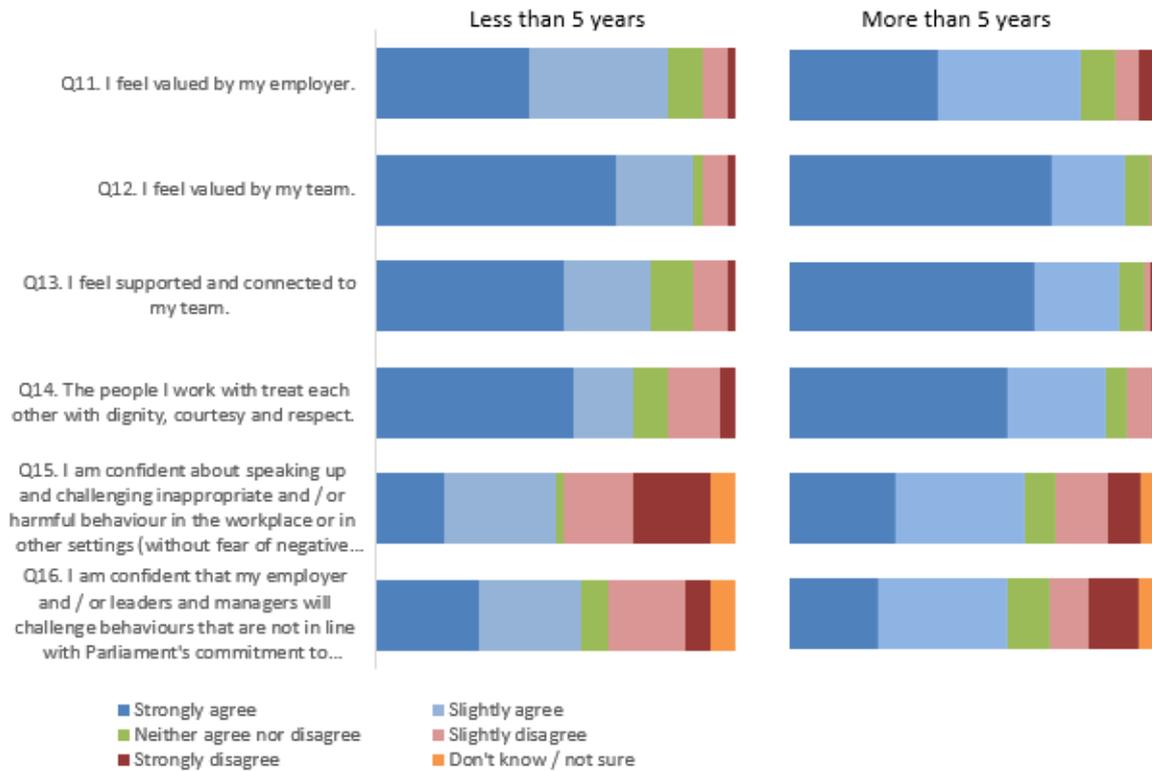
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	46% (41)	35% (31)	7% (6)	8% (7)	4% (4)	0% (0)
Q12	78% (69)	16% (14)	3% (3)	1% (1)	1% (1)	1% (1)
Q13	73% (65)	18% (16)	7% (6)	0% (0)	1% (1)	1% (1)
Q14	64% (57)	19% (17)	4% (4)	9% (8)	3% (3)	0% (0)
Q15	35% (31)	29% (26)	10% (9)	16% (14)	6% (5)	4% (4)
Q16	29% (26)	33% (33)	10% (9)	13% (12)	8% (7)	7% (6)

Fig 11. – SPCB Staff Responses: Culture and Behaviour by age – Chart/Data Table – BASE: x 25 to 44; x 45 plus. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

### Duration

Across Q11-Q16 (see Fig.12), staff with less than five years' service and those with more than five years show broadly similar overall patterns, with high agreement on team culture and more mixed views on speaking up and leadership action. However, some meaningful differences emerge in strength of agreement and in the distribution of uncertainty and disagreement.

A consistent pattern is that longer-serving staff tend to report higher 'strongly agree' responses. For example, on Q13 (feeling supported and connected): 67% strongly agree among longer-serving staff versus 52% of those with less than five years. On the employer-focused and confidence items (Q11, Q15, Q16), the patterns are mixed but generally aligned in overall agreement, while intensity differs. For Q15 (confidence to speak up), strong agreement is higher among longer-serving staff (29% vs 19%), and overall disagreement is higher among newer staff (40% vs 23%).



Less than five years:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	43% (18)	38% (16)	10% (4)	7% (3)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q12	67% (28)	21% (9)	2% (1)	7% (3)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q13	52% (22)	24% (10)	12% (5)	10% (4)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q14	55% (23)	17% (7)	10% (4)	14% (6)	5% (2)	0% (0)
Q15	19% (8)	31% (13)	2% (1)	19% (8)	21% (9)	7% (3)
Q16	29% (12)	29% (12)	7% (3)	21% (9)	7% (3)	7% (3)

More than five years:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	40% (53)	39% (51)	10% (13)	6% (8)	5% (7)	0% (0)
Q12	71% (94)	20% (26)	7% (9)	2% (2)	0% (0)	1% (1)
Q13	67% (88)	23% (3)	7% (9)	2% (2)	2% (2)	1% (1)
Q14	59% (78)	27% (35)	6% (8)	7% (9)	2% (2)	0% (0)
Q15	29% (38)	35% (46)	8% (11)	14% (19)	9% (12)	5% (6)
Q16	24% (32)	35% (46)	11% (15)	11% (14)	14% (19)	5% (6)

Fig 12. – SPCB Staff Responses: Culture and Behaviour by duration – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 42 less than 5 years; 132 more than 5 years. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## **Additional Information: Free-text responses**

55 SPCB staff answered the open-ended question “Please share any additional thoughts or insights related to the questions you’ve answered.” There were four dominant themes (each present in 10-25 responses), in order of weight:

- Culture of under-challenge and normalisation of poor behaviour
- Power, hierarchy and psychological safety
- Inclusion, identity and belonging
- Member behaviour and a two-tier culture.

### **Culture of under-challenge and normalisation of poor behaviour**

Several respondents describe a pattern where poor or discourteous behaviour is observed but not consistently addressed, including when witnessed by senior staff. Over time, this creates a sense that certain behaviours are tolerated or “just how things are done”, which erodes confidence that raising issues will lead to change. The experience is not uniform; rather, it varies significantly across teams and managers, reinforcing a perception that outcomes depend on who is involved rather than what occurred.

This variability is often characterised as a “lottery” of team culture. Informal approaches are frequently attempted but do not always resolve matters; in these cases, reluctance to escalate formally means issues can linger and harden into norms. The overall effect is a drift towards normalisation, where low-level incivility and unacceptable conduct become background noise rather than triggers for constructive intervention.

### **Power, hierarchy and psychological safety**

A prominent thread concerns psychological safety: people weigh up status, relationships and ongoing dependencies before deciding whether to speak up. The fear of repercussions - formal or informal - makes it harder to challenge behaviour, particularly where the individual concerned is a manager, a peer with influence, or someone they must continue to work alongside. Respondents describe the emotional cost of raising concerns in hierarchical settings, citing both personal vulnerability and the practical reality of close quarters working.

Power dynamics also shape confidence. For some, the barrier is not a lack of policy or process but the perceived risks of using them - worries about career impact, team relationships and being seen as “the problem”. This results in self-censorship and under-reporting, even among those who say they are otherwise confident in speaking up.

### **Inclusion, identity and belonging**

A significant set of comments speaks to inclusion and belonging, particularly in relation to LGBT+ colleagues. Some decisions and signals from leadership are experienced as a retreat from previous inclusivity, leaving individuals feeling less valued and less safe. Alongside identity-based concerns, respondents also describe in-group dynamics -

longstanding informal social networks, tenure-based camaraderie and close friendships, which can inadvertently exclude newer or less connected colleagues and shape how concerns are received and result in unequal voice in decision-making.

Together, these factors contribute to uneven experiences of belonging across the organisation. Where inclusion feels fragile or contingent, staff confidence in cultural values is weakened, and people are less certain that issues affecting dignity and respect will be treated impartially. Strengthening a shared sense of belonging is therefore seen as core to a healthy culture, not an optional add-on.

### **Member behaviour and a two-tier culture**

Many respondents identify a distinct cultural issue around interactions with Members. They describe a two-tier culture where behaviours from Members that would be unacceptable among staff are perceived to go unchallenged, or to be handled inconsistently. This intensifies the sense of power imbalance and leaves staff uncertain whether discourtesy or bullying by Members will be addressed robustly. Several respondents stated that they had not personally experienced such behaviour, but report seeing or hearing about it, and say the wider signals affect staff confidence and morale.

Respondents note a need not just for policy clarity, but for visible, fair and consistent standards that apply regardless of status. They call for expectations about respectful conduct by Members to be embedded as a corporate norm, with transparent routes for addressing concerns. Without this parity, staff report feeling unprotected and less willing to raise issues.

### **Trends over Time**

Comparison with a 2021 survey of SPCB staff, undertaken by Progressive (428 responses, 81.4% response rate), suggests some broad shifts in awareness, confidence and perceptions of support, although direct comparison is limited by differences in survey focus, question wording and response options.

Awareness of how to access advice shows a clear increase (table 5): in 2021, 57% reported being aware of how to access advice and 24% were unsure, whereas in 2026, 81% agreed that they knew how to access advice and only 4% were unsure.

Awareness of policies appears broadly consistent with 2021 levels - 72% in 2021 compared with 68% in 2026 - but the proportion selecting negative responses has doubled, from 8% in 2021 to 16% in 2026 (table 6). A similar pattern is seen in confidence in the adequacy of policies: 60% agreed in 2021 that adequate support and policies were in place, compared with 53% who were confident in 2026, while those expressing a negative view increased from 14% to 36% (table 7). These differences may in part reflect changes to response options in 2026.

Confidence in knowing how to report incidents also shows an upward trend (table 8), from 71% in 2021 to 76% in 2026, alongside a corresponding drop in those not confident (from 25% to 13%). Confidence that reports would be taken seriously remains broadly stable, shifting only slightly from 67% confident in 2021 to 64% in 2026 (table 9). Confidence in challenging inappropriate behaviour is also largely unchanged, with 64% confident in 2021 compared with 60% in 2026 (table 10).

Taken together, these patterns suggest improvements in practical knowledge and advice-seeking, alongside a slight downward shift in staff confidence in the adequacy of policies. Perceptions of the wider organisational systems and culture appear to show little change.

**Table 5: Awareness of how to access advice**

Date	Question	Yes	No	Don't know/ not sure
2021	Are you aware of how to access advice on other forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination?	57%	19%	24%
		<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree or disagree</b>
2026	I know how to access advice on inappropriate and/ or harmful behaviour in the workplace or in other settings.	81%	15%	4%

**Table 6: Awareness of policies**

Date	Question	Yes	No	Don't know/ not sure
2021	Are you aware of the policies in place to deal with any other form of harassment, bullying or discrimination at work?	72%	8%	20%
		<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/ not sure</b>
2026	I know which policies and procedures underpin the Parliament's zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate and/ or harmful behaviour.	68%	16%	3%

Note: Does not total 100% as there was also an option of neither agree nor disagree in 2026 (13%).

**Table 7: Adequacy of support and policies**

Date	Question	Agree	Disagree	Don't know/ not sure
2021	How much do you agree or disagree that there are adequate support and policies in place to deal with other forms of harassment, bullying and discrimination at work?	60%	14%	10%
		<b>Confident</b>	<b>Not confident</b>	<b>Don't know/ not sure</b>
2026	How confident are you that the policies in place are adequate to deal with all forms of inappropriate and/ or harmful behaviour in the workplace or other settings	53%	36%	10%

Note: Does not total 100% as there was also an option of neither agree nor disagree in 2021 (15%) and due to rounding.

**Table 8: Confidence in knowing how to report incidents**

Date	Question	Confident	Not confident	Don't know/ not sure
2021	How confident are you that you know how to report incidents of any other form of harassment, bullying or discrimination?	71%	25%	4%
		<b>Confident</b>	<b>Not confident</b>	<b>Don't know/ not sure</b>
2026	I know how to report inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour in the workplace or in other settings	76%	13%	2%

Note: Does not total 100% as there was also an option of “neither agree nor disagree” in 2026 (8%) and due to rounding.

**Table 9: Confidence that reports would be taken seriously**

Date	Question	Confident	Not confident	Don't know/ not sure
2021	How confident are you that, if you reported an incident of other forms of harassment, bullying or discrimination, it would be treated seriously?	67%	24%	8%
		<b>Confident</b>	<b>Not confident</b>	<b>Don't know/ not sure</b>
2026	How confident are you that, if you did report an incident of inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour it would be treated seriously?	64%	25%	10%

Note: Does not total 100% as there was also an option of “N/A – would not report” in 2021 (1%) and 2026 (1%).

**Table 10: Challenging behaviours**

Date	Question	Confident	Not confident	Don't know/ not sure
2021	How confident are you about challenging all forms of harassment, bullying and inappropriate behaviour in the workplace?	64%	31%	5%
		<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Don't know/ not sure</b>
2026	I am confident about speaking up and challenging inappropriate and/ or harmful behaviour in the workplace or in other settings (without fear of negative repercussions for me).	60%	28%	5%

Note: Does not total 100% as there was also an option of “Neither agree nor disagree” in 2026 (7%) and due to rounding.

## MSP Staff – Key Themes

### Policies & Procedures

This section addresses the findings from qualitative and quantitative data gathered on views on existing policies, procedures and guidance, including how accessible and clear these are to the MSP staff group.

The key subject areas within the Policies and Procedures section of the survey were:

- Information availability and policy awareness
- Knowledge of process and advice availability
- Confidence in policies and reporting
- Open-ended feedback – potential improvements and insights.

### Information Availability and Policy Awareness

Questions 1-6 asked about the information and understanding respondents have in relation to bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour policies.

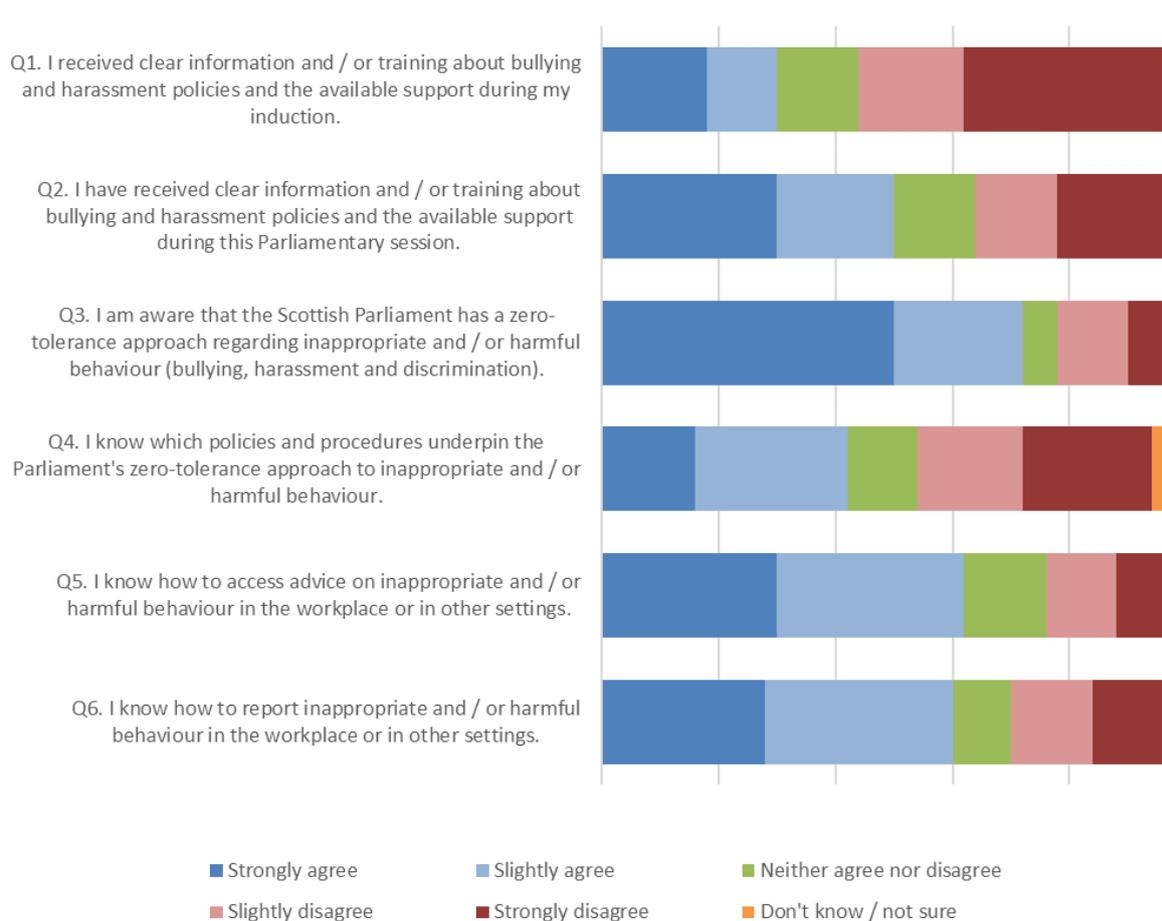
Across the six questions, MSP staff responses (see Fig.13) show a wide range of views on awareness and understanding of bullying, harassment, and inappropriate behaviour policies.

For induction information (Q1), 30% of respondents agree they received clear information, while over half (53%) disagree. A further 14% neither agree nor disagree. For information provided during the parliamentary session (Q2), agreement increases to 51%, with 34% disagreeing and 14% selecting neither agree not disagree.

Awareness of the zero-tolerance approach (Q3) is the area with the highest agreement, with 73% of respondents agreeing and 18% disagreeing. Views on the underlying policies and procedures (Q4) are more evenly divided: 43% agree, 40% disagree, and 12% neither agree nor disagree.

Knowledge of how to access advice (Q5) is reported by 64% of respondents, while 22% disagree and 14% express no clear view. Knowledge of how to report inappropriate behaviour (Q6) shows a similar distribution, with 62% agreeing and 26% disagreeing.

Overall, the findings show clear awareness of the zero-tolerance position, moderate levels of agreement around knowing how to seek advice or report concerns, and more mixed views on the clarity of induction information and the specifics of the policies and procedures.



	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	18% (9)	12% (6)	14% (7)	18% (9)	35% (17)	2% (1)
Q2	31% (15)	20% (10)	14% (7)	14% (7)	20% (10)	0% (0)
Q3	51% (25)	22% (11)	6% (3)	12% (6)	6% (3)	2% (1)
Q4	16% (8)	27% (13)	12% (6)	18% (9)	22% (11)	4% (2)
Q5	31% (15)	33% (16)	14% (7)	12% (6)	10% (5)	0% (0)
Q6	29% (14)	33% (16)	10% (5)	14% (7)	12% (6)	2% (1)

Fig 13. – MSP Staff Responses: Information Availability and Policy Awareness – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 49. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

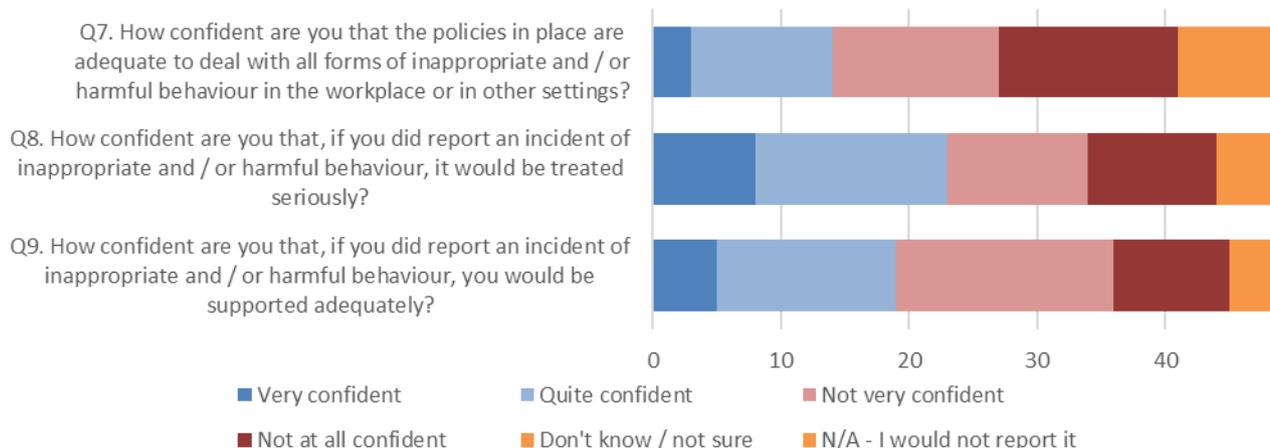
### Confidence in Policies/Reporting

In the second sub-section, Questions 7-9 asked about confidence in how the system would function if inappropriate behaviour were reported.

Across the three confidence questions (see Fig.14), the distribution of responses for MSP staff indicates generally low levels of confidence, with substantial proportions selecting low-confidence options or expressing uncertainty. For confidence in whether the existing policies are adequate (Q7), only 28% of respondents report being very or quite confident, while a majority (56%) indicate low confidence. A further 16% are unsure. This represents the lowest level of confidence across the three questions. Confidence that a reported

incident would be treated seriously (Q8) is more evenly split. 47% of respondents are very or quite confident, while 42% report low confidence. 10% say they do not know. Confidence in being adequately supported after reporting (Q9) is also low. 39% report being very or quite confident, while 53% report low confidence. As in Q7, low-confidence responses outnumber high-confidence ones.

Overall, the results show that confidence in the adequacy of policies, the seriousness of response, and the likelihood of receiving support is limited within this staff group, with low-confidence responses frequently outweighing higher-confidence ones.



	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	6% (3)	22% (11)	27% (13)	29% (14)	16% (8)	0% (0)
Q8	16% (8)	31% (15)	22% (11)	20% (10)	10% (5)	0% (0)
Q9	10% (5)	29% (14)	35% (13)	18% (14)	8% (8)	0% (0)

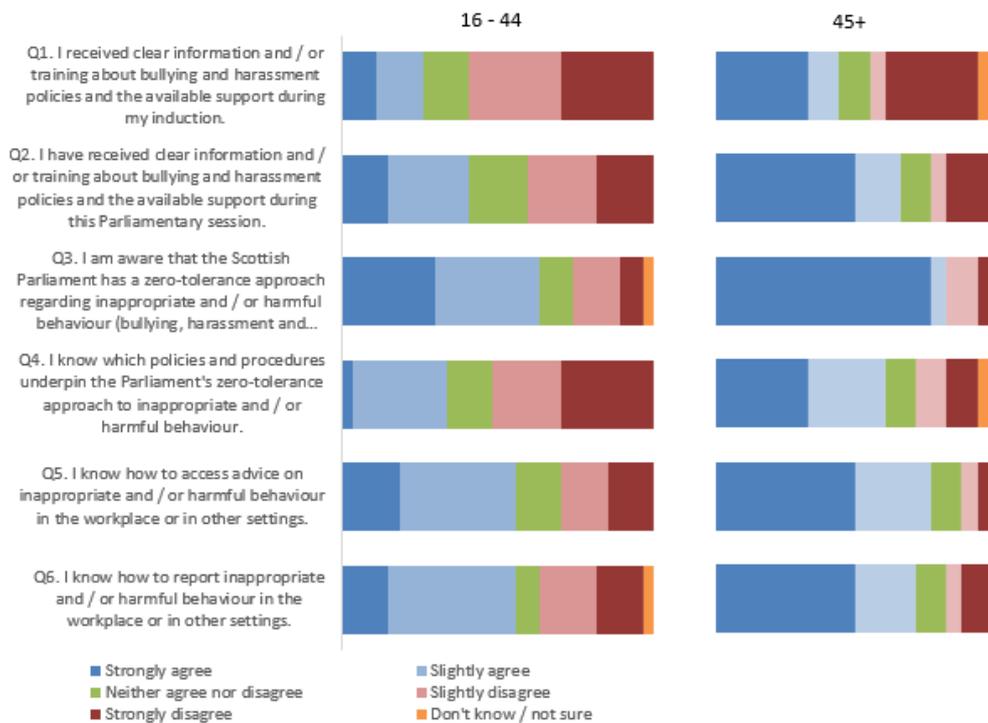
Fig 14. – MSP Staff Responses – Confidence in Policies/Reporting – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 49. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Sub-group analysis

### Age

Across Q1-Q6 (see Fig.15), the pattern for MSP staff shows marked differences by age, with the 45+ group reporting substantially higher agreement and confidence across almost all items, and the 16-44 group showing greater uncertainty and substantially higher disagreement, indicating a clear age-related pattern in information clarity, awareness and practical understanding. For induction information (Q1), only 26% of 16-44-year-olds agree they received clear information, compared with 44% of those aged 45+; disagreement remains high in both groups (60% vs 39%). For information during the parliamentary session (Q2), the gap widens further: 41% agreement among younger staff versus 67% among older staff. The contrast is similarly pronounced for Q3 (zero-tolerance awareness), where 84% of the 45+ group agree compared with 63% of younger staff, and younger respondents show higher disagreement (22% vs 17%). Policy understanding (Q4) shows one of the starkest differences: only 34% of those aged 16-44 agree compared with 61% of those aged 45+, and disagreement is 52% among younger staff versus 22% for older staff.

Knowledge of advice routes (Q5) follows a similar pattern (56% vs 78%) and so does knowing how to report (Q6) (56% vs 72%).



16 to 44:

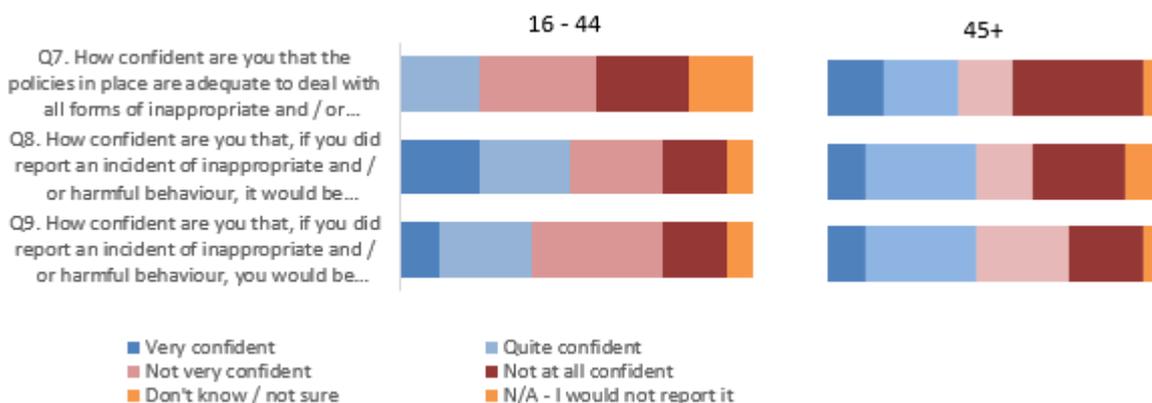
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	11% (3)	15% (4)	15% (4)	30% (8)	30% (8)	0% (0)
Q2	15% (4)	26% (7)	19% (5)	22% (6)	19% (5)	0% (0)
Q3	30% (8)	33% (9)	11% (3)	15% (4)	7% (2)	4% (1)
Q4	4% (1)	30% (8)	15% (4)	22% (6)	30% (8)	0% (0)
Q5	19% (5)	37% (10)	15% (4)	15% (4)	15% (4)	0% (0)
Q6	15% (4)	41% (11)	7% (2)	19% (5)	15% (4)	4% (1)

45-plus:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	33% (6)	11% (2)	11% (2)	6% (1)	33% (6)	6% (1)
Q2	50% (9)	17% (3)	11% (2)	6% (1)	17% (3)	0% (0)
Q3	78% (14)	6% (1)	0% (0)	11% (2)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q4	33% (6)	28% (5)	11% (2)	11% (2)	11% (2)	6% (1)
Q5	50% (9)	28% (5)	11% (2)	6% (1)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q6	50% (9)	22% (4)	11% (2)	6% (1)	11% (2)	0% (0)

Fig 15. – MSP Staff Responses: Information Availability and Policy Awareness by age – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 27 16-44, 18 45+. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Across Q7-Q9 (see Fig. 16), younger MSP staff (16-44) report consistently lower confidence than those aged 45+, with confidence levels differing notably in scale rather than direction. For Q7 (policies adequate), only 22% of younger respondents feel confident compared with 39% of the 45+ group, and younger staff show higher uncertainty and more “not very confident” responses (33% vs 17%).



16 to 44:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	0% (0)	22% (6)	33% (9)	26% (7)	19% (5)	0% (0)
Q8	22% (6)	26% (7)	26% (7)	19% (5)	7% (2)	0% (0)
Q9	11% (3)	26% (7)	37% (10)	19% (5)	7% (2)	0% (0)

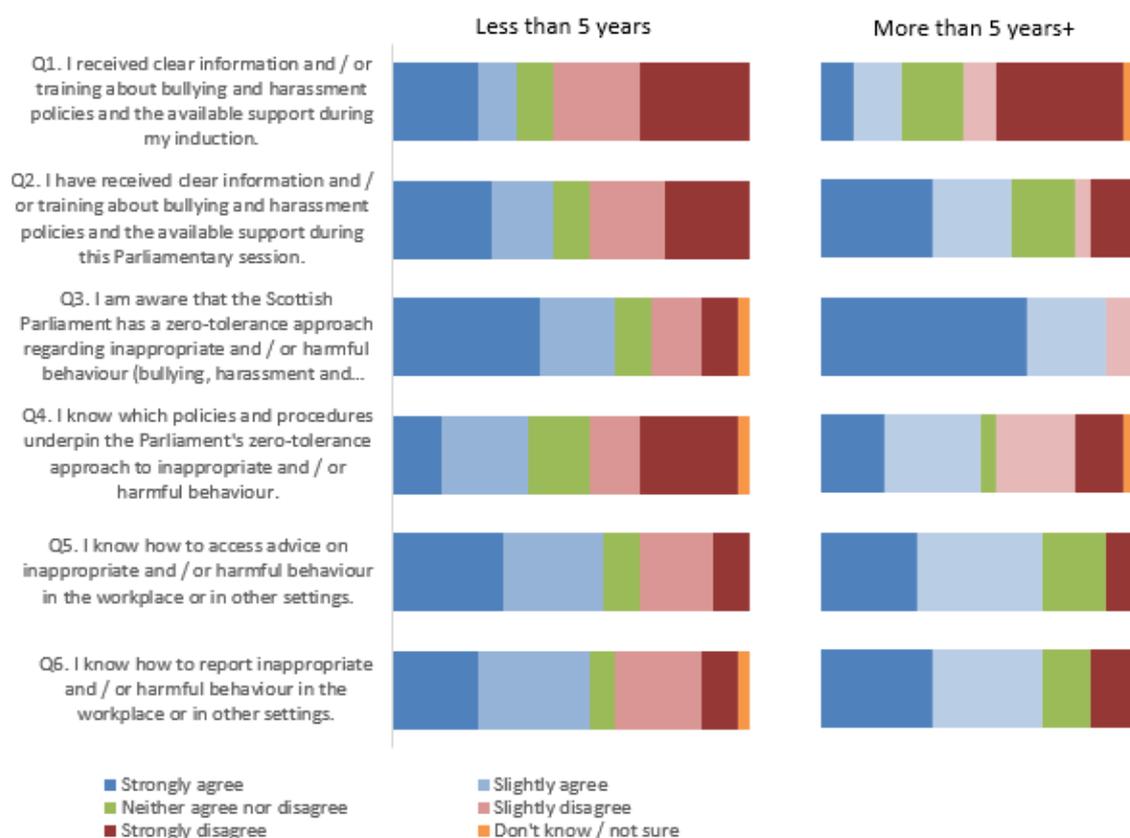
45-plus:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	17% (3)	22% (4)	17% (3)	39% (7)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q8	11% (2)	33% (6)	17% (3)	28% (5)	11% (2)	0% (0)
Q9	11% (2)	33% (6)	28% (5)	22% (4)	6% (1)	0% (0)

Fig 16. – MSP Staff Responses: Confidence in Policies/ Reporting by age – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 27 16-44, 18 45+. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

### Duration

Comparing MSP staff with less than five years’ service and those with five years or more (see Fig.17), aside from a shared weakness on induction information, across Q2-Q6, MSP staff with five years or more consistently show higher agreement and lower disagreement. For Q2 (session information), 60% agree compared with 45% among those with less than five years, while disagreement is lower (20% compared with 45%). For Q3 (zero-tolerance awareness), agreement is 90% among those with five years or more, compared with 62% among newer MSP staff. For Q4 (policy understanding), 50% agree compared with 38%, although disagreement is similar (around 40%) and newer MSP staff show more neither agree nor disagree responses (17% compared with 5%).



Less than five years:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	24% (7)	10% (3)	10% (3)	24% (7)	31% (9)	0% (0)
Q2	28% (8)	17% (5)	10% (3)	21% (6)	24% (7)	0% (0)
Q3	41% (12)	21% (6)	10% (3)	14% (4)	10% (3)	3% (1)
Q4	14% (4)	24% (7)	17% (5)	14% (4)	28% (8)	3% (1)
Q5	31% (9)	28% (8)	10% (3)	21% (6)	10% (3)	0% (0)
Q6	24% (7)	31% (9)	7% (2)	24% (7)	10% (3)	3% (1)

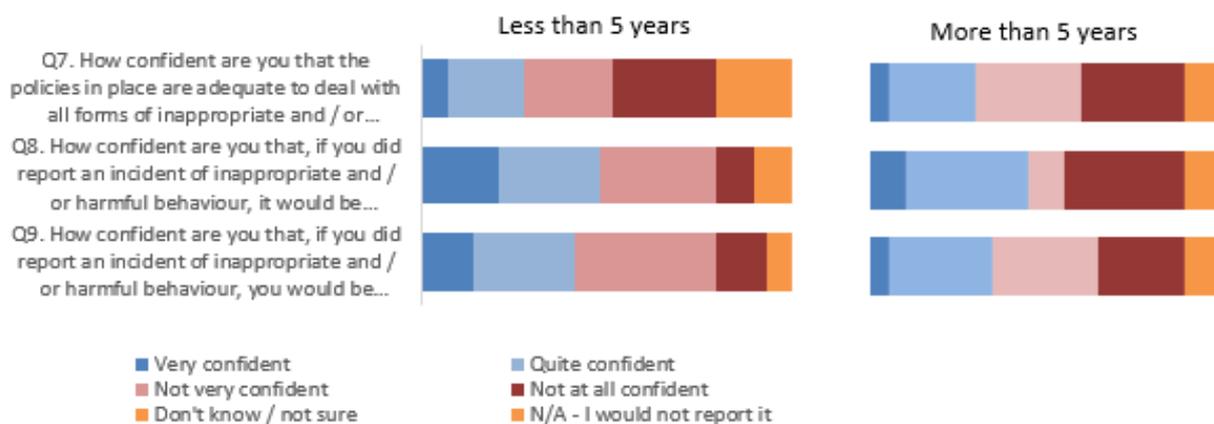
More than five years:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	10% (2)	15% (3)	20% (4)	10% (2)	40% (8)	5% (1)
Q2	35% (7)	25% (5)	20% (4)	5% (1)	15% (3)	0% (0)
Q3	65% (13)	25% (5)	0% (0)	10% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q4	20% (4)	30% (6)	5% (1)	25% (5)	15% (3)	5% (1)
Q5	30% (6)	40% (8)	20% (4)	0% (0)	10% (2)	0% (0)
Q6	35% (7)	35% (7)	15% (3)	0% (0)	15% (3)	0% (0)

Fig 17. – MSP Staff Responses: Information Availability and Policy Awareness by duration – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 29 less than 5 years, 20 more than 5 years. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

For Q5 (knowing how to access advice), MSP staff with five years or more report higher agreement (70% compared with 59%) and substantially lower disagreement (10% compared with 31%). A similar pattern appears in Q6 (knowing how to report concerns), with 70% agreement among longer-serving MSP staff and 55% among newer MSP staff.

Across Q7-Q9 (see Fig.18), confidence levels among MSP staff with less than five years' service and those with five years or more are broadly consistent. Neither group reports high confidence, but MSP staff with less than five years' service report higher 'don't know' responses, particularly on Q7 (21% compared with 10%), suggesting greater uncertainty. In contrast, MSP staff with five years or more show more split views across the confidence scale on Q8 and Q9.



Less than five years:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	7% (2)	21% (6)	24% (7)	28% (8)	21% (6)	0% (0)
Q8	21% (6)	28% (8)	31% (9)	10% (3)	10% (3)	0% (0)
Q9	14% (4)	28% (8)	38% (11)	14% (4)	7% (2)	0% (0)

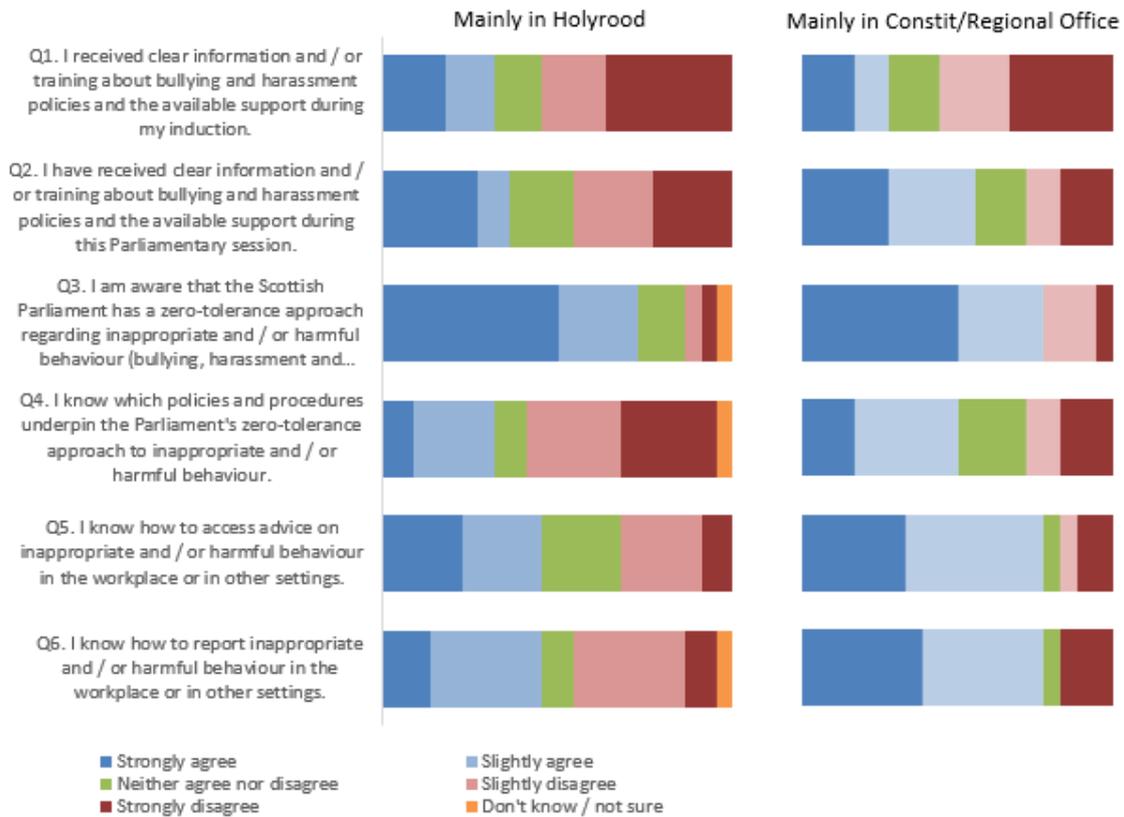
More than five years:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	5% (1)	25% (5)	30% (6)	30% (6)	10% (2)	0% (0)
Q8	10% (2)	35% (7)	10% (2)	35% (7)	10% (2)	0% (0)
Q9	5% (1)	30% (6)	30% (6)	25% (5)	10% (2)	0% (0)

Fig 18. – MSP Staff Responses: Confidence in Policies/ Reporting by duration – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 29 less than 5 years, 20 more than 5 years. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

### Location

Across Q1-Q6, the overall response patterns for staff based mainly in Holyrood and those based mainly in constituency or regional offices are broadly similar (see Fig.19). There are, however, some differences.



Mainly in Holyrood:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	18% (4)	14% (3)	14% (3)	18% (4)	36% (8)	0% (0)
Q2	27% (6)	9% (2)	18% (4)	23% (5)	23% (5)	0% (0)
Q3	50% (11)	23% (5)	14% (3)	5% (1)	5% (1)	5% (1)
Q4	9% (2)	23% (5)	9% (2)	27% (6)	27% (6)	5% (1)
Q5	23% (5)	23% (5)	23% (5)	23% (5)	9% (2)	0% (0)
Q6	14% (3)	32% (7)	9% (2)	32% (7)	9% (2)	5% (1)

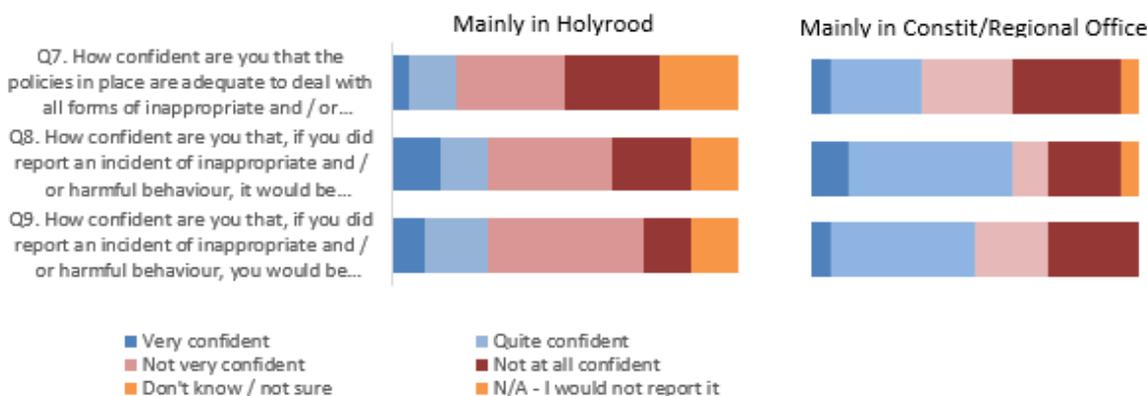
Mainly in Constituency/Regional Office:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1	17% (3)	11% (2)	17% (3)	22% (4)	33% (6)	0% (0)
Q2	28% (5)	28% (5)	17% (3)	11% (2)	17% (3)	0% (0)
Q3	50% (9)	28% (5)	0% (0)	17% (3)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q4	17% (3)	33% (6)	22% (4)	11% (2)	17% (3)	0% (0)
Q5	33% (6)	44% (8)	6% (1)	6% (1)	11% (2)	0% (0)
Q6	39% (7)	39% (7)	6% (1)	0% (0)	17% (3)	0% (0)

Fig 19. – MSP Staff Responses: Information Availability and Policy Awareness by location – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 22 Holyrood, 18 constituency/ regional office. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Constituency/regional staff show higher agreement on information received during the parliamentary session (Q2: 56% vs 36%) and on knowing how to report (Q6: 78% vs 46%). They also show stronger agreement on knowing how to access advice (Q5: 77% vs 46%). Holyrood-based staff, by contrast, are much more likely to disagree on information received during the parliamentary session (Q2: 46% vs 28%), knowing the underpinning policies/procedures (54% vs 28%), knowing how to access advice (Q5: 32% vs 17%), and knowing how to report (Q6 41% vs 17%).

Across Q7-Q9, confidence levels are consistently lower among Holyrood-based respondents and noticeably higher among those in constituency or regional offices. For Q7 (policies adequate), only 19% of Holyrood staff feel confident compared with 34% in constituency/regional offices, while lack of confidence is high in both groups (Holyrood 59%, constituency/regional 61%). For Q8 (a report would be taken seriously), the gap is more pronounced: 28% confident at Holyrood versus 61% in constituency/regional offices, with Holyrood showing almost double the proportion reporting low confidence (59% vs 33%). A similar pattern appears for Q9 (would be supported), where confidence is 27% at Holyrood compared with 50% outside Holyrood, and low confidence is 59% versus 50% respectively. Overall, respondents based mainly in constituency/regional offices report higher confidence and lower uncertainty, while Holyrood-based staff indicate greater doubt and consistently lower confidence across all three measures.



Mainly in Holyrood:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	5% (1)	14% (3)	32% (7)	27% (6)	23% (5)	0% (0)
Q8	14% (3)	14% (3)	36% (8)	23% (5)	14% (3)	0% (0)
Q9	9% (2)	18% (4)	45% (10)	14% (3)	14% (3)	0% (0)

Mainly in Constituency/Regional Office:

	Very confident	Quite confident	Not very confident	Not at all confident	Don't know / not sure	N/A - I would not report it
Q7	6% (1)	28% (5)	28% (5)	33% (6)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q8	11% (2)	50% (9)	11% (2)	22% (4)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q9	6% (1)	44% (8)	22% (4)	28% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Fig 20. – MSP Staff Responses: Confidence in Policies/ Reporting by location – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 22 Holyrood, 18 constituency/ regional office. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Suggested Improvements: Open-ended Responses

26 MSP staff answered the open-ended question “What improvements can be made to existing policies, reporting mechanisms.” There were four dominant themes (each present in 5-10 responses), in order of weight:

- Reporting barriers, fear and the need for independent routes
- Induction, information access and visibility of support
- Member behaviour and accountability
- Employment model and power imbalance.

### **Reporting barriers, fear and the need for independent routes**

Several respondents describe high perceived risk in raising concerns, particularly where the employing MSP is implicated. Fear of job loss, retaliation or reputational harm is common, and current routes are seen as unsafe, unclear or too closely tied to the MSP/party to be trusted. They call for independent and, where necessary, anonymous options to enable reporting without triggering immediate consequences or being dismissed as politically motivated.

The tone across comments is one of vulnerability and exposure, with staff weighing up the personal cost of speaking out against an employer who also holds political power and controls their job security. This dynamic discourages early escalation and fuels under-reporting.

### **Induction, information access and visibility of support**

A consistent strand raised by several respondents concerns patchy or absent induction for MSP staff and poor visibility of what support is available to them. Information is perceived as hard to find or not routinely provided, with some staff discovering key processes only by searching themselves. Respondents ask for standardised onboarding, regular communications, and simple, accessible materials (e.g., working links, concise guides, clear contact points) so that staff understand how to access support from day one.

Some MSP staff noted a need for more proactive, regular contact from parliamentary services; one specifically pointed to constituency offices as having less routine contact with parliamentary services and feeling disconnected from central supports. Regular check-ins and repeated signposting were suggested to ensure awareness is maintained over time, not just at entry.

### **Member behaviour and accountability**

Several respondents highlight inappropriate or harmful behaviours by some MSPs - from office interactions to conduct in the Chamber - and question whether such behaviours are addressed consistently or carry meaningful consequences. This includes reports of disrespectful language towards protected groups and concerns about expectations and boundaries at events, particularly where alcohol is involved. One respondent said they had

heard of a colleague experiencing sexual harassment from an MSP, and one said that they had witnessed an MSP sexually assaulting young female members of staff. Both said that staff had not felt supported, and the respondent who said they had witnessed sexual assault said that the response of the party had been to “brush everything underneath the carpet.” Collectively, these experiences undermine trust and reinforce perceptions of a two-tier culture, which permits abuse of power.

As well as independent and anonymous reporting routes, respondents ask for clearer standards and visible enforcement that apply regardless of status or setting (office, Chamber, or external events), and guidelines for events with alcohol. Without this, MSP staff describe feeling scared, unprotected and uncertain that concerns will be taken seriously or lead to change.

### **Employment model and power imbalance**

A small number of respondents highlight the structural risk created by MSPs acting as individual employers. They describe weak accountability, limited oversight, and a power imbalance that can deter staff from raising issues when the employer is the source of the problem. Where professional HR support is absent or unclear, respondents say essential employment functions (e.g., inductions, annual reviews, issue resolution) can be inconsistent or missing. The result is structural vulnerability for staff, and a system that relies on party processes or unions rather than a neutral, accountable employer function.

Respondents suggested providing professional, independent HR support to MSP staff that sits outside party structures, and a couple suggested moving towards a single-employer model.

## **Culture & Behaviour**

This section addresses the findings from qualitative and quantitative data gathered on views on everyday behaviours and working practices that define the parliamentary and team cultures in relation to the Members’ staff group.

The key subject areas within the Culture and Behaviour section of the survey were:

- Value and connectivity with employer and team
- Dignity and respect
- Confidence in reporting and capacity to challenge
- Open-ended feedback – further insights.

Questions 11-16 asked about workplace culture, relationships, and confidence to challenge behaviour.

Overall, MSP staff report very positive experiences within their immediate teams, but more mixed views about the wider organisational culture and confidence to challenge behaviour

(see Fig.21). Feeling valued by their team (Q12) is especially strong, with 92% agreeing, and similarly high proportions feel supported and connected (Q13: 83%) and perceive dignity, courtesy and respect among colleagues (Q14: 73%). In contrast, feeling valued by their employer (Q11) is notably lower at 63%, with 20% disagreeing.

Confidence-related items show the clearest variation: for Q15 (confidence to speak up), only 51% agree while 36% disagree; and for Q16 (confidence that leaders will challenge inappropriate behaviour), 61% agree but almost a third (30%) disagree.

Overall, the findings suggest a strong and supportive team environment, set against less certain views about feeling valued and leadership action and strong concerns about the safety of speaking up.



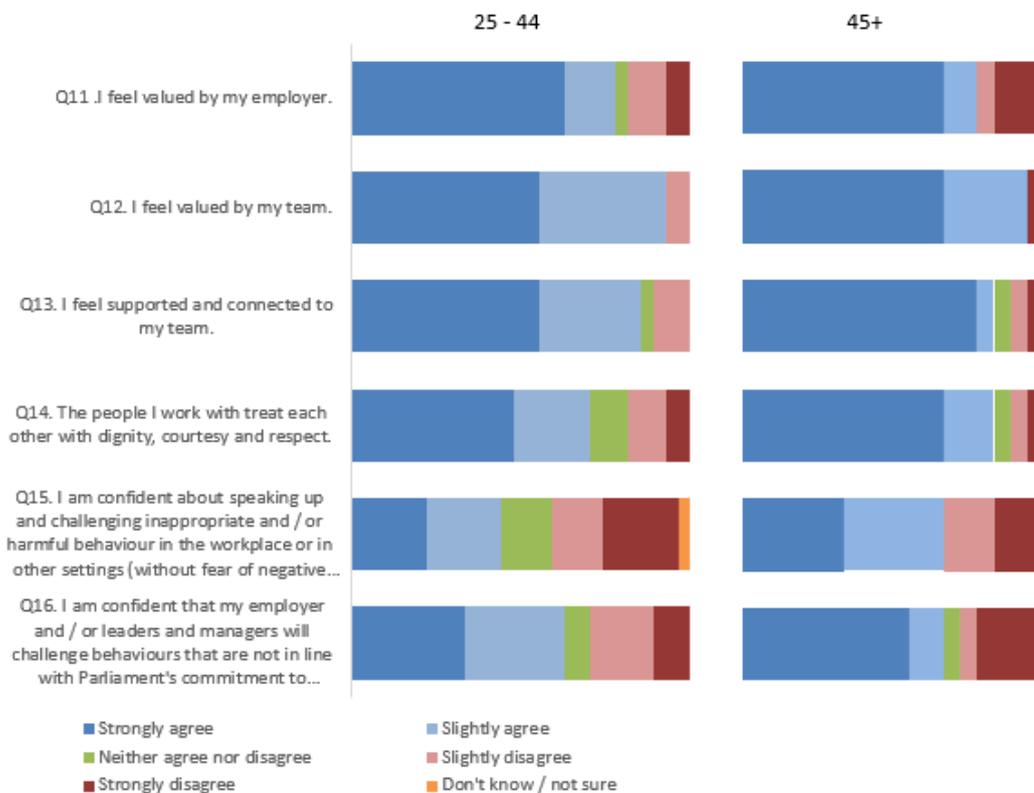
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	63% (31)	12% (6)	4% (2)	10% (5)	10% (5)	0% (0)
Q12	61% (30)	31% (15)	2% (1)	4% (2)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q13	61% (30)	22% (11)	6% (3)	8% (4)	2% (1)	0% (0)
Q14	53% (26)	20% (10)	10% (5)	8% (4)	8% (4)	0% (0)
Q15	24% (12)	27% (13)	10% (5)	16% (8)	20% (10)	2% (1)
Q16	41% (20)	20% (10)	8% (4)	14% (7)	16% (8)	0% (0)%

Fig 21. – MSP Staff Responses: Culture and Behaviour – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 174. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## Sub-group analysis

### Age

Across Q11-Q16, the two age groups show broadly consistent overall agreement on most items, but the 45+ group is generally higher on 'strongly agree' (see Fig.22). Feeling valued by employer (Q11) and valued by team (Q12) are essentially the same in total agreement (both 78% for Q11; 93-95% for Q12), though strongly agree is higher among 45+ (Q12: 67% vs 56%). Feeling supported/connected (Q13) is similar in totals (86% vs 84%), but strongly agree is markedly higher for 45+ (78% vs 56%). The first clear divergence appears on Q14 (dignity, courtesy and respect): 84% agree among 45+ versus 70% among 25-44 (strongly agree 67% vs 48%). Differences are largest on Q15 (confidence to speak up), where agreement is 66% for 45+ versus 44% for 25-44 (with the younger group also showing more 'neither'); by contrast, Q16 (confidence leaders will act) is similar in totals (67% vs 63%), but again stronger in intensity for 45+ (56% strongly agree vs 33%).



25 to 44:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	63% (17)	15% (4)	4% (1)	11% (3)	7% (2)	0% (0)
Q12	56% (15)	37% (10)	0% (0)	7% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q13	56% (15)	30% (8)	4% (1)	11% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q14	48% (13)	22% (6)	11% (3)	11% (3)	7% (2)	0% (0)
Q15	22% (6)	22% (6)	15% (4)	15% (4)	22% (6)	4% (1)
Q16	33% (9)	30% (8)	7% (2)	19% (5)	11% (3)	0% (0)

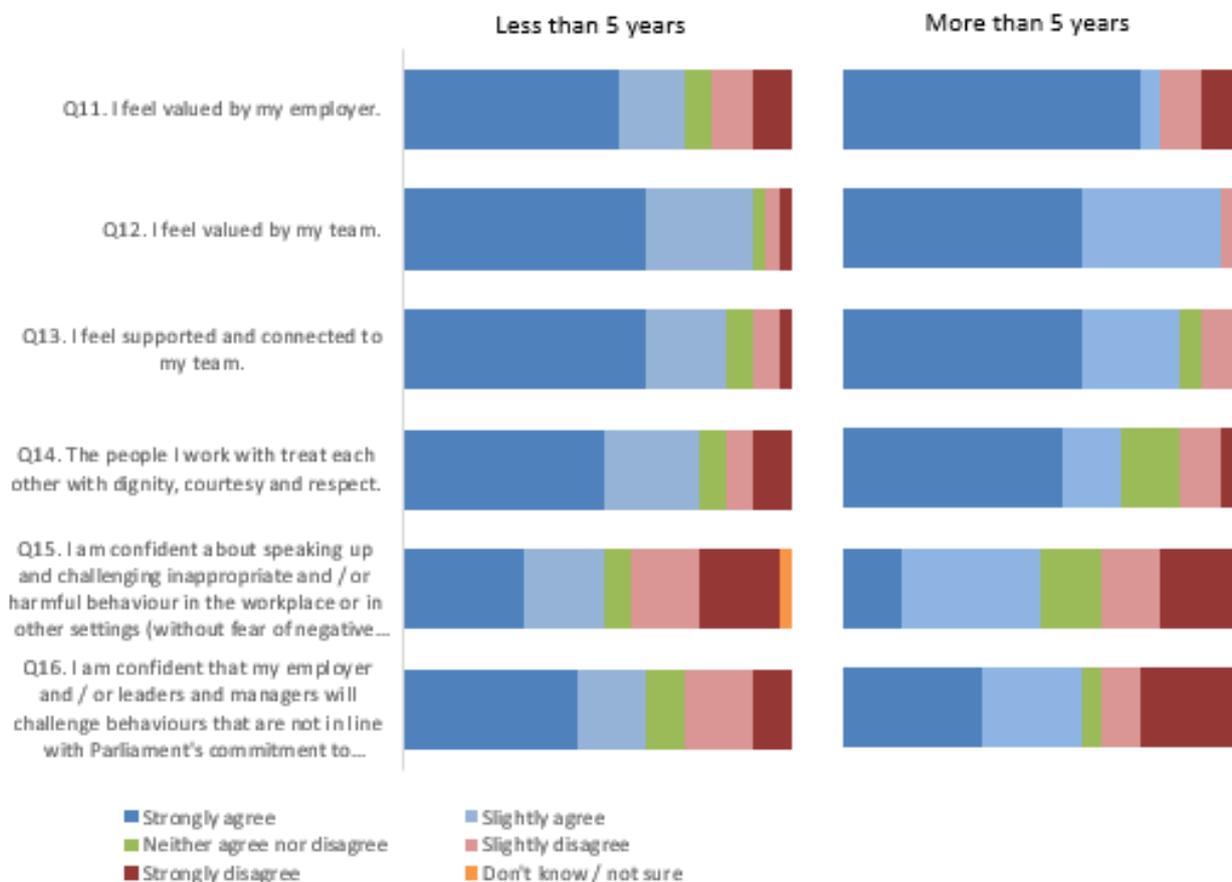
45-plus:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	67% (12)	11% (2)	0% (0)	6%	17%	0% (0)
Q12	67% (12)	28% (5)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q13	78% (14)	6% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q14	67% (12)	17% (3)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q15	33% (6)	33% (6)	0% (0)	17% (3)	17% (3)	0% (0)
Q16	56% (10)	11% (2)	6% (1)	6% (1)	22% (4)	0% (0)

Fig 22. – MSP Staff Reponses: Culture and Behaviour by age – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 27 16-44, 18 45+. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

### Duration

Across Q11-Q16, overall agreement is broadly consistent, but the intensity differs in key places for staff with less than five years' service and those with five years or more (see Fig.23). Strongly agree is much higher for staff with five years or more on Q11 (valued by employer: 75% vs 55%) On the confidence items, newer staff show higher 'strongly agree' on Q15 (confidence to speak up: 31% vs 15%) and Q16 (confidence leaders will act: 45% vs 35%), whereas longer-serving staff show higher 'strongly disagree' on Q16 (25% vs 10%).



Less than five years:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	55% (16)	17% (5)	7% (2)	10% (3)	10% (3)	0% (0)
Q12	62% (18)	28% (8)	3% (1)	3% (1)	3% (1)	0% (0)
Q13	62% (18)	21% (6)	7% (2)	7% (2)	3% (1)	0% (0)
Q14	52% (15)	24% (7)	7% (2)	7% (2)	10% (3)	0% (0)
Q15	31% (9)	21% (6)	7% (2)	17% (5)	21% (6)	3% (1)
Q16	45% (13)	17% (5)	10% (3)	17% (5)	10% (3)	0% (0)

More than five years:

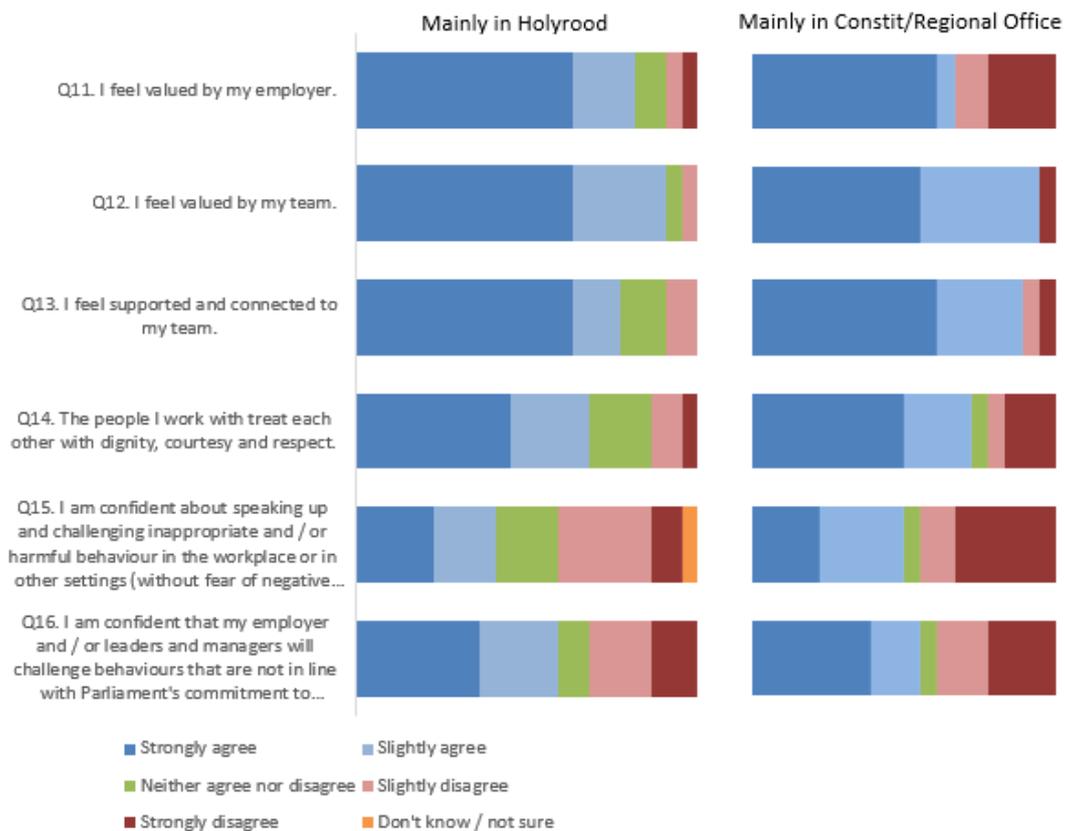
	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	75% (15)	5% (1)	0% (0)	10% (2)	10% (2)	0% (0)
Q12	60% (12)	35% (7)	0% (0)	5% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q13	60% (12)	25% (5)	5% (1)	10% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q14	55% (11)	15% (3)	15% (3)	10% (2)	5% (1)	0% (0)
Q15	15% (3)	35% (7)	15% (3)	15% (3)	20% (4)	0% (0)
Q16	35% (7)	25% (5)	5% (1)	10% (2)	25% (5)	0% (0)

Fig 23. – MSP Staff Reponses: Culture and Behaviour by duration – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 29 less than 5 years, 20 more than 5 years. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

### Location

Across Q11-16, there are similar overall levels of agreement, but some clear differences by location, with constituency/regional respondents showing higher levels of strong disagreement, indicating a more polarised profile, whereas Holyrood respondents express more uncertain views (see Fig.24).

For example, strong disagreement is notably higher across several items (Q11: 22% vs 5% Holyrood; Q14: 17% vs 5%; Q15: 33% vs 9%; Q16: 22% vs 14%). In contrast, Holyrood-based respondents show more mid-scale responses and uncertainty, with higher proportions selecting 'neither' or 'don't know' (e.g., Q13: 14% vs 0%; Q14: 18% vs 6%; Q15: 23% vs 6%). When looking at combined totals, agreement remains high for both groups on team-related items (Q11-Q13), but disagreement tends to be slightly higher overall among constituency/regional staff, while uncertainty is consistently higher among Holyrood staff.



Mainly in Holyrood:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	64% (14)	18% (4)	9% (2)	5% (1)	5% (1)	0% (0)
Q12	64% (14)	27% (6)	5% (1)	5% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q13	64% (14)	14% (3)	14% (3)	9% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)
Q14	45% (10)	23% (5)	18% (4)	9% (2)	5% (1)	0% (0)
Q15	23% (5)	18% (4)	18% (4)	27% (6)	9% (2)	5% (1)
Q16	36% (8)	23% (5)	9% (2)	18% (4)	14% (3)	0% (0)

Mainly in Constituency/Regional Office:

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q11	61% (11)	6% (1)	0% (0)	11% (2)	22% (4)	0% (0)
Q12	56% (10)	39% (7)	0% (0)	0% (0)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q13	61% (11)	28% (5)	0% (0)	6% (1)	6% (1)	0% (0)
Q14	50% (9)	22% (4)	6% (1)	6% (1)	17% (3)	0% (0)
Q15	22% (4)	28% (5)	6% (1)	11% (2)	33% (6)	0% (0)
Q16	39% (7)	17% (3)	6% (1)	17% (3)	22% (4)	0% (0)

Fig 24. – MSP Staff Responses: Culture and Behaviour by location – Chart/Data Table – BASE: 22 Holyrood, 18 constituency/ regional. Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

## **Additional Information: Free-text responses**

17 MSP staff answered the open-ended question “Please share any additional thoughts or insights related to the questions you’ve answered.” There were three dominant themes (each present in 5-7 responses), in order of weight:

- Power dynamics and employment insecurity
- Member behaviour and party leadership accountability
- Variability and the “lottery” of office culture.

### **Power dynamics and employment insecurity**

Unlike SPCB staff, several MSP staff responding to the survey describe power dynamics rooted in the employment relationship itself: the MSP is simultaneously employer, line manager and political principal. This creates a climate in which speaking up can be reframed as disloyalty or “undermining”, and where staff weigh the real or perceived risks to their job security, standing and longer-term prospects in a small political labour market. Several accounts describe how, when tensions arise, feedback becomes personalised, ideas are dismissed, and there is no safe route to challenge. This results in a culture of self-protection and caution, where MSP staff calculate whether raising a concern is worth the potential consequences.

### **Member behaviour and party leadership accountability**

Several respondents raised how MSP behaviour is addressed - or not - beyond the office. For these respondents, there is a perceived reluctance of party leadership to act decisively on allegations. A few refer to cases “swept under the carpet”, requirements that deter complainants (e.g., naming the accuser to proceed), or a general sense that consequences are unlikely.

These wider signals can override positive local culture. Some staff report feeling well supported by their MSP or office manager, but express low faith that serious allegations elsewhere will be handled decisively. Public conduct - what is tolerated in the Chamber or online – is also perceived by a few respondents as a cultural cue about what the system is willing to challenge, which in turn affects confidence and willingness to speak openly.

### **Variability and the “lottery” of office culture**

Responses suggest that experiences of culture vary sharply between offices and settings. Some respondents report supportive MSPs and Heads of Office, strong peer relationships and union backing; others describe unpredictability, one-sided performance conversations and no safe way to challenge when difficulties arise. One points to a gulf between Holyrood and constituency offices, and to variability within the same party. The net effect is a felt “lottery”: dignity, respect and fair challenge depend largely on which MSP you work for, rather than consistently upheld norms.

## Trends over Time

There are very limited data on MSP staff experiences of bullying and harassment, with the last [survey conducted in 2018 by Progressive](#) (350 responses, 75.9% response rate). While the 2018 and 2026 surveys are not directly comparable due to differences in focus and question wording, some broad contrasts can be noted.

Reported confidence in knowing how to report incidents appears lower in 2026 than in 2018, with confidence falling from 77% in relation to sexual harassment reporting in 2018 to 61% in 2026 for reporting inappropriate or harmful behaviour more generally (table 11). Confidence that reports would be taken seriously has also decreased (table 12). In 2018, confidence ranged from 68% to 79% depending on the behaviour described, whereas by 2026 this had reduced to 47%, and those responding that they were not confident had increased from 12% to 22% depending on the behaviour described, to 43% in 2026.

Across both areas, the 2026 findings suggest a substantial deterioration in MSP staff confidence in reporting processes and outcomes compared with 2018.

**Table 11: Confidence in knowing how to report incidents**

Date	Question	Confident	Not confident	
2018	How confident are you that you know how to report incidents of sexual harassment or sexist behaviour?	77%	22%	
		Agree	Disagree	Don't know/ not sure
2026	I know how to report inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour in the workplace or in other settings	61%	27%	2%

Note: Does not total 100% as there was also an option of neither agree nor disagree in 2026 (10%) and due to rounding.

**Table 12: Confidence that reports would be taken seriously**

Date	Question	Confident	Not confident	Don't know/ not sure
2018	How confident are you that, if you reported an incident of sexual harassment it would be treated seriously?	79%	12%	8%
	How confident are you that, if you reported an incident of sexist behaviour it would be treated seriously?	68%	22%	9%
		Confident	Not confident	Don't know/ not sure
2026	How confident are you that, if you did report an incident of inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour it would be treated seriously?	47%	43%	10%

Note: Does not total 100% as there was also an option of "N/A – would not report" in 2018 (sexual harassment 1%; sexist behaviour 2%) and 2026 (0%).

# Appendices

## Dignity at Work Arrangements Survey 2026 Question Set

### Survey – our policies and procedures

- Policies and procedures
- Parliamentary culture
- About you
- About your employment

#### Introduction

Share your views on our current policies, procedures, and guidance, including how accessible and clear you find them.

As part of the Inclusive Parliament Review, we're reviewing our Dignity at Work arrangements to strengthen our zero-tolerance approach to bullying and harassment. This survey seeks views from SPCB and Members' Staff and is an important step in ensuring that our workplace policies and practices remain effective, inclusive and compliant. This form has been designed for SPCB and Members' staff. Agency workers and contractors are employed by different organisations and, therefore, should not complete this form.

#### Before you begin

Please be assured that your responses to this survey will remain anonymous and are being treated as confidential. A small number of colleagues from the Colleague Experience team will compile the responses into a summary report, ensuring no one can be identified. Your input is important, so please take your time to complete the form in one sitting (approximately 5-10mins), as it cannot be saved for later.

When completing your responses, please do not include any information that could identify yourself or anyone else.

Questions that require an answer are marked with an asterisk (\*).

Privacy notice: [SPCB Privacy Notice Dignity at Work arrangements survey.pdf](#) (intranet link)

#### Policies and procedures

This section seeks your views on how well you understand the availability of Parliament's policies and procedures, your confidence in accessing advice and support, and your experiences with reporting and addressing inappropriate behaviour. We want to ensure that all colleagues have the knowledge and confidence to recognise, report and help prevent unacceptable behaviour.

**Inappropriate behaviour** means any behaviour that adversely affects the dignity of another person. It includes harassment, sexual harassment, bullying, intimidation and

unlawful discrimination. Instances of inappropriate behaviour may constitute criminal offences.

**Harmful behaviour** means any behaviour leading to an incident in which a person is abused, threatened or assaulted. The behaviour may cause either physical or psychological harm or both. Instances of harmful behaviour may constitute criminal offences.

**1. I received clear information and/or training about bullying and harassment policies and the available support during my induction**

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

**2. I have received clear information and/or training about bullying and harassment policies and the available support during this parliamentary session**

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

**3. I am aware that the Scottish Parliament has a zero-tolerance approach regarding inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour (bullying, harassment, and discrimination)**

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

**4. I know which policies and procedures underpin the Parliament's zero-tolerance approach to inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour.**

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

**5. I know how to access advice on inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour in the workplace or in other settings**

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree

Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

**6. I know how to report inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour in the workplace or in other settings**

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

**7. How confident are you that the policies in place are adequate to deal with all forms of inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour in the workplace or in other settings**

Very confident
Quite confident
Not very confident
Not at all confident
Don't know/not sure

**8. How confident are you that, if you did report an incident of inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour it would be treated seriously?**

Very confident
Quite confident
Not very confident
Not at all confident
Don't know/not sure
N/A – I would not report it

**9. How confident are you that, if you did report an incident of inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour, you would be supported adequately?**

Very confident
Quite confident
Not very confident
Not at all confident
Don't know/not sure
N/A – I would not report it

**10. What improvements can be made to existing policies, reporting mechanisms and support services?**

Please do not include any information that could identify you or anyone else.

Free text response
--------------------

## Parliament culture and behaviours

This section invites you to reflect on the everyday behaviours and working practices that define the parliamentary and team cultures. We want to understand if you are being treated with dignity, courtesy and respect. By sharing your perspectives, you will help us understand how culture can actively support these values and when it can challenge and undermine them through a tolerance of inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour. Your insights will guide us in identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

### 11. I feel valued by my employer

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

### 12. I feel valued by my team

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

### 13. I feel supported and connected to my team

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

### 14. The people I work with treat each other with dignity, courtesy and respect

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

### 15. I am confident about speaking up and challenging inappropriate and/or harmful behaviour in the workplace or in other settings (without fear of negative repercussions for me)

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree

Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

**16. I am confident that my employer and/or leaders and managers will challenge behaviours that are not in line with Parliament's commitment to dignity, courtesy and respect**

Strongly agree
Slightly agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Slightly disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know/not sure

**Please share any further thoughts or insights associated with the questions you have answered.**

Please share any additional thoughts or insights related to the questions you've answered.

Please do not include any information that could identify you or anyone else.

Free text box
---------------

## Personal Information

In this section we ask for some personal information. Sharing these details allows us to analyse responses in a way that highlights patterns and ensures our policies and support are effective for all groups.

Your answers are entirely confidential and will only be used for research and improvement purposes. Please remember not to include any information that could identify you or anyone else. Your openness helps us create a more inclusive and respectful workplace for everyone.

### About you

**What age group are you in?**

16-20 years
21 - 24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65-74
75 and over
Prefer not to say

**Do you consider yourself to have a disability?**

(Under the Equality Act 2010, you're disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.)

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

**Do you consider yourself to be neurodivergent?**

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

**What is your ethnic group?**

White Scottish
White Other British
White Irish
White Polish
Gypsy / Traveller
Roma
Showman / Showwoman
Other white ethnic group
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
Pakistani
Scottish Pakistani
British Pakistani
Indian
Scottish Indian
British Indian
Bangladeshi
Scottish Bangladeshi
British Bangladeshi
Chinese
Scottish Chinese
British Chinese
Other Asian ethnic group
African
Scottish African
British African
Caribbean or Black
Arab

Scottish Arab
British Arab
Other Ethnic Group
Prefer not to say

**What religion, religious denomination or body do you belong to?**

None
Christian
Muslim
Hindu
Buddhist
Sikh
Jewish
Pagan
Another religion or body
Prefer not to say

**What is your sex?**

Man
Woman
Prefer not to say

**Do you now or have you ever identified as non-binary?**

(Non-binary is a term for people whose gender identity does not sit comfortably with ‘man’ or ‘woman.’ Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of binary identities, while others reject them entirely)

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

**Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?**

(Trans is an ‘umbrella’ term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were registered at birth)

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

**Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?**

Heterosexual/Straight
Gay or Lesbian
Bisexual
Other sexual orientation
Prefer not to say

## Your Employment

In this section you are asked questions about your employer, contract type and how long you have worked for the Scottish Parliament. We're asking you this to help us understand any potential trends.

**Q1 - Which of the following best describes your role/position at the Scottish Parliament? [MUST ANSWER]**

Description
Members' Staff, including interns
SPCB Staff, including interns

**Q1b. FOR MSP STAFF**

**Where do you mainly work?**

Description
Work mainly at Holyrood
Work mainly in a constituency or regional office
Work mainly remotely

**Q2. FOR MSP Staff**

**Which of the following job family and salary ranges do you think best fits with your role? (please tick one)**

<b>Administration &amp; Office Management</b>	
*£24,050	£31,157
£31,158	£37,918
£37,919	£44,070
<b>Casework</b>	
£28,125	£34,527
£34,528	£38,906
£38,907	£42,999
<b>Communications</b>	
£29,421	£35,017
£35,018	£38,976
£38,977	£43,738
<b>Research &amp; Policy</b>	
£30,912	£36,406
£36,407	£42,750
£42,751	£54,249
<b>Don't know/not sure</b>	

**Q3. FOR MSP STAFF**

**Which parliamentary group do you work for?**

Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party
Scottish Green Party

Scottish Labour Party
Scottish Liberal Democrats
Scottish National Party
Reform UK
Independent

**Q2. FOR SPS STAFF**

**Which directorate do you work in?**

Chief Executive Group
Finance and Resilience
Operations and Digital
Parliamentary Business
People, Communications and Inclusion

**Q3 FOR SPS STAFF**

**What is your grade level?**

Grade 1 and 2
Grade 3 and 4
Grade 5 and 6
Grade 7 and above
1st and 2nd year legal trainee
Assistant Solicitor and Solicitor
Senior Solicitor and Solicitor Team Leader

**FOR ALL**

**Q4 How long have you worked at the Scottish Parliament (including working at a local office or remotely)?**

less than 2 years
2-5 years
5-10 years
more than 10 years

**Q5. Is this your first job since leaving full-time education (e.g. school, college or university)?**

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

**Q6 What is your contract status?**

Permanent
Fixed-term

Paid internship
Unpaid internship

**Q7 Do you work full time /part-time hours/term-time hours?**

Full-time
Part-time
Full-time Term-time
Part-time Term-time

**Q8 Are you a member of a Trade Union?**

Yes
No
Prefer not to say

**SURVEY ENDS**

Thank you for taking the time to share your views. Your input is invaluable in helping us create a more respectful and inclusive Parliament. If completing this survey has raised any concerns or you would like confidential advice or support, please visit: [Bullying and Harassment - Complaints and Support](#) (intranet link) for details.

### **Stakeholder Briefing - Findings from previous work on bullying, harassment, culture and behaviours in the Scottish Parliament**

#### **Strengths to build on**

The organisation has several positive foundations that can support further progress:

- Independent external assessment in 2023 found that the Parliament's D&I policies and strategic development were indicative of a genuine organisational commitment to inclusion.
- A strong sense of organisational purpose continues across both SPCB and MSP staff, with the 2026 survey showing consistently positive team-level cultures, high levels of support, and strong feelings of being valued.
- Knowledge of how to report concerns has remained stable over time, with a majority of SPCB staff in 2026 saying they know how to report issues (77%) and how to access advice (82%).
- Awareness of how to seek advice has improved (from 57% in 2021 to 81% in 2026 for SPCB staff) and remains moderate among MSP staff (64%).
- Use of the Independent Support Service support is patchy, but where it is used the feedback was generally positive, with many staff valuing having a confidential, safe space to discuss concerns and consider options.
- Team-level working relationships remain a strength, with very high proportions of both SPCB and MSP staff in 2026 reporting that they feel supported, connected and treated with dignity and respect in their immediate teams.

These strengths indicate a foundation of commitment and capability that can be built on through targeted leadership action.

#### **Areas where employer focus would add value**

Across surveys, reviews and qualitative feedback, several consistent, cross-cutting themes emerge. These represent areas where greater clarity, stronger processes, and enhanced leadership visibility would help reinforce confidence in the organisation's commitment to a safe, respectful and inclusive working environment.

Key risks associated with these themes include:

- Erosion of trust in organisational processes.
- Reduced reporting of concerns.
- Reputational harm if issues are not addressed visibly and consistently.

Strengthening communication, leadership/employer role modelling, the coherence of systems and processes would help address these risks.

## **Declining response rates as a key indicator**

One of the clearest signals emerging across the evidence is the declining staff response rate to these surveys over time. This trend aligns closely with broader cultural and organisational challenges identified in the review, and suggests that reduced participation is linked to several interconnected factors, including:

- Declining trust that issues raised will lead to meaningful change.
- Limited visibility of organisational action in areas highlighted previously.
- Concerns about confidentiality and independence, particularly in relation to MSP-related processes.
- Lower psychological safety, especially for under-represented groups.
- Uncertainty about the impact of staff input on organisational decision-making.

These factors reinforce each other, gradually reducing engagement and making it more difficult to secure high participation without deliberate, visible efforts to rebuild trust. Ensuring that staff can clearly see how their input informs decision-making will be essential to reversing this trend.

## **Next steps**

Taken together, these insights highlight a set of priority areas where well-targeted, strategic leadership action would likely have the greatest impact.

For SPCB staff these are:

- Leadership visibility, accountability and modelling
- Two-tier culture involving Members
- Policy clarity and confidence
- Informal / early-resolution routes
- Career progression, grading and role clarity
- Data transparency and tracking
- Training
- Staff diversity networks and engagement
- Political identities and psychological safety
- External stakeholder management
- Induction and onboarding.

For MSP staff these are:

- MSP accountability
- Revisiting independence of complaints against MSPs
- Policy clarity and communication
- Induction and onboarding
- Training
- HR support
- Political identities and psychological safety.

## SPCB staff

Priority Area	Issues	What's Working	Potential Actions
Leadership visibility, accountability and modelling	Staff consistently report lack of visible leadership, inconsistent modelling of inclusive behaviour, limited “speak-up” culture, and lower psychological safety for under-represented groups. Leadership not consistently challenging poor behaviour and lack of visible accountability mechanism for leaders.	Strong purpose alignment; many value flexible working and supportive line managers some good leadership modelling.	2023 Inclusive Parliament recommendations: set guiding principles for management and senior leaders to role model and demonstrate inclusive behaviours to engage with their teams and peers. Publish clear leadership behaviour expectations; embed in performance management; visible senior presence through forums, floorwalking; mandate leadership capability training (inclusive behaviour, bystander, trauma informed); increase leadership visibility in challenging inappropriate behaviour; regular publication of progress against inclusion targets with named senior owners; mandate leadership capability training (inclusive behaviour, bystander, traumainformed); increase leadership visibility in challenging inappropriate behaviour; regular publication of progress against inclusion targets with named senior owners.
Two-tier culture involving Members (shared with MSP staff, actions differ)	SPCB staff report a perceived two-tier culture where inappropriate Member behaviour is less likely to be challenged or addressed compared with staff behaviour. This reduces trust, weakens psychological safety, and discourages early resolution or reporting.	Independent support service valued; some instances where Member behaviour is well-managed and supported by leadership.	Clarify behavioural expectations for MSPs; ensure consistent accountability mechanisms; strengthen independence for concerns involving MSPs; increase leadership visibility in challenging inappropriate Member behaviour.

Policy clarity and confidence (shared with MSP staff)	Policies hard to navigate; declining confidence; inconsistent communication; weak induction.	High awareness of zero-tolerance; strong advice-seeking awareness.	Unify policy spine; one-route map; simplify pathways, showing processes, independence and confidentiality; stronger communication of how works; improved induction materials.
Informal / early-resolution routes	Staff want clearer, safer ways to resolve issues early, including HR-facilitated discussions and access to independent advice. Concerns about confidentiality and follow-through remain.	Independent support service is valued; staff feel safe when supported informally.	Develop clear early-resolution routes; offer HR-facilitated conversations or expand access to independent advice; publish guidance on informal options.
Career progression, grading and role clarity	Unclear pathways; perceptions of inconsistent grading; hierarchy issues; lower psychological safety for some groups.	Diversity improving at lower grades; optimism about PM system.	2023 Inclusive Parliament recommendations – define expectations, responsibilities and required skills by grade and groups, and for People Managers to support their teams to progress. Create progression framework; introduce consistent and transparent criteria for internal recruitment; audit role clarity and grading in consistencies; strengthen manager capability on development conversations.
Data transparency and tracking	Survey inconsistency; no stable dataset; low trust in disclosure.	Appetite for transparency; past high engagement.	2023 Inclusive Parliament recommendations: Identify measurable KPIs to monitor the end-to-end employee lifecycle and analyse through the lens of diversity data as well as Group and grade. Include leavers. Annual reporting cycle; KPIs; stable question set; communicate usage and privacy.

Training (some aspects shared with MSP staff)	Inconsistent delivery; gaps in Culture of Respect; need practical behaviour-management tools.	High willingness to participate; positive past feedback.	Mandatory cycle; prioritise managers; track completion and impact; build early-resolution and bystander skills.
Staff diversity networks and engagement	Networks unclear or inactive; missing ToR; overlap/confusion with newer colleague forums; absence of intersectional approach. Missed opportunity for ongoing staff voice.	Strong appetite; improves psychological safety.	Relaunch networks; clear ToR; SET sponsors; intersectional approach' dedicated intranet presence.
Political identities and psychological safety (shared with MSP staff)	Harm reported where political debate intersects with identity.	Strong values platform.	Provide guidance; integrate scenarios in training.
External stakeholder management	Unclear expectations for external stakeholders (visitors, contractors, media); lack of documentation on external partnerships or how they align with strategic objectives and create impact.	Opportunity to codify expectations and potential impact.	2023 Inclusive Parliament recommendations: Publish behavioural expectations for externals; document external partnerships and how align with strategic priorities and create impact to identify additional partnerships.
Induction and onboarding (principle)	Major gap (40% clear information); inconsistent onboarding.	Where provided, valued.	Create SPCB induction framework; mandatory pack; centralised materials.

## MSP staff

Priority Area	Issues	What's Working	Potential Actions
MSP accountability (shared with SPCB staff, actions differ)	High variability between MSP offices; inconsistent behaviour; weak accountability; perception of a two-tier culture where MSP behaviour is not addressed consistently.	Some MSPs model excellent behaviour and create safe, respectful environments.	Define behavioural expectations for MSPs; strengthen accountability structures; ensure consistent consequences; provide guidance on employer duties.

Revisiting independence of complaints against MSPs	Joint Working Group (2018) questioned SPPA's role in sanctioning; structural independence unresolved since 2018–2021. Westminster has since established the IEP, creating a clear modern comparator. Confidence that reports will be taken seriously has dropped, and MSP staff report fear of career consequences and belief “nothing will happen.” Non reporting linked to power imbalance, poor experiences, confidentiality concerns.	Ethical Standards Commissioner already investigates MSP complaints; external comparators show credible independent models; appetite in earlier reviews for full independence; independent support service already exists.	Set out options appraisal for fully independent determination/sanction model; clarify principles (fairness, transparency, timeliness); re communicate how independence currently works. Publish anonymised case themes, durations and outcomes (as ICGS); strengthen anti retaliation commitments.
Policy clarity and communication (shared with SPCB)	Policies unclear or hard to find; MSP staff unsure what applies; communication inconsistent; lack of unified policy structure.	Clear explanations from MSPs or central teams improve confidence.	Create unified policy spine covering SPCB and MSP staff; improve communication; provide simple policy maps; embed in induction.
Induction and onboarding (principle shared with SPCB staff; specifics different)	Only 30% report clear induction; many receive none; inconsistent information provision.	Some MSP offices provide strong induction with clear expectations.	Mandatory MSP-office induction framework; central onboarding hub; templates for office handbooks.
Training (MSP and MSP-staff focused)	Training rarely provided; need training for MSPs on employer duties, early resolution, and respectful behaviour.	High interest in training.	Develop MSP-specific training on duties, fair treatment, early resolution; mandatory onboarding modules; optional advanced leadership modules.
HR support	No HR-style support route; staff feel isolated; limited peer support.	Informal peer networks in some offices.	Create formal HR support route; confidential advice; structured peer support options.

Alcohol/event risk management as a procedural control	Alcohol is a cited contributory factor in a minority of Westminster cases and in NSW findings		Targeted controls around events and after-hours settings can reduce incident exposure but must sit alongside accessible routes, independent intake and clear timelines
Political identities and psychological safety (shared with SPCB staff)	Identity-linked politics can affect psychological safety; power imbalance intensifies risks.	Strong values platform.	Provide tailored guidance; integrate scenarios into training for MSP offices.

## Benchmarking with other legislatures - policy and reporting arrangements and approach comparison

### Policy and reporting arrangements comparison

Legislature	Policy Coverage and Clarity	Reporting Routes	Independence and Oversight	Support Available	Culture Monitoring	Known Challenges
<b>ICGS (Westminster)</b>	Most comprehensive and detailed policies addressing bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct	Multiple channels including 24/7 helpline, online, anonymous options	Independent processes in principle, but concerns noted about internal influence and long timescales	Victim Support provides advice and Independent Sexual Misconduct Advisers	Annual reporting, quality assurance and thematic analysis	Lengthy assessments, complexity, reports sometimes rejected, risk of delays reducing confidence
<b>Senedd (Welsh Parliament)</b>	Clear Dignity and Respect policies with detailed guidance	Contact Officers, helpline, encourages informal action first	Oversight through clear policy structures	Unwelcome Behaviour Support Line available 24/7	Regular pulse surveys and staff engagement mechanisms	Some complexity, reliance on informal routes may not suit all cases
<b>Scottish Parliament</b>	Policies exist but vary in clarity, scope and consistency; some do not apply to MSP staff	Multiple routes exist but are not always clear; Independent Support and Advocacy Service available	Some independent elements but mixed visibility and no dedicated support for MSP staff	Independent Support and Advocacy Service; EAP; Member Services; People and Culture	Limited systematic monitoring; ad hoc data analysis	Power imbalances, inconsistent socialisation, fear of reporting, absence of duty to report

Legislature	Policy Coverage and Clarity	Reporting Routes	Independence and Oversight	Support Available	Culture Monitoring	Known Challenges
<b>Northern Ireland Assembly</b>	Less robust policy suite on sexual harassment and misconduct	Standard reporting routes available but limited specialist structures	Limited external independence identified	Support available through general staff services	No major structured monitoring highlighted	Insufficient depth to draw best practice examples

To put the Scottish Parliament’s policies in context, the review compared them with practices in the other UK legislatures. The table below summarises how the Scottish Parliament’s approach compares to Westminster (UK Parliament), the Welsh Senedd, and the Northern Ireland Assembly on key dimensions:

Dimension	Scottish Parliament (Holyrood)	Westminster (UK Parliament)	Welsh Senedd (Welsh Parliament)	Northern Ireland Assembly
<b>Policy Robustness</b>	Several policies exist (Dignity at Work, Sexual Harassment, Codes of Conduct), but not fully comprehensive. Some gaps in scope (e.g. MSPs’ staff not covered by Dignity at Work) and clarity (unclear consequences for violations). Duty to report harassment is not yet explicit. Policies need updates to include bystander and third-party harassment, and to tighten definitions. Regular review of policies is recommended to ensure they stay effective.	<b>Most comprehensive</b> set of policies via the <b>Independent Complaints and Grievance Scheme (ICGS)</b> . Covers bullying, harassment (all forms), sexual misconduct under a unified framework. Clear Codes of Conduct for MPs and staff. However, the system is <b>complex and bureaucratic</b> , and an ongoing independent review found it <b>too slow</b> in practice (e.g. initial assessments of complaints taking ~10 weeks on average, full investigations taking 8+ months). The ICGS is founded on strong principles of independence and confidentiality, but some stakeholders find it overly	Has a <b>Dignity and Respect policy</b> and related guidance for staff and Members. Policies address harassment and bullying, and the Senedd has a <b>Staff Code of Conduct</b> as well. The framework is robust, though not as extensive as Westminster’s ICGS. One notable feature: the Senedd’s policy explicitly encourages attempting <b>informal resolution first</b> “where appropriate,” which sets a supportive tone without absolutely requiring it. Overall policy approach is clearer and somewhat less legalistic/complex than Westminster’s, due in part to the smaller scale.	Policies exist (Code of Conduct, etc.), but <b>no dedicated comprehensive scheme</b> . The Assembly’s provisions on harassment are relatively basic and have not been highlighted as best practice. The review noted a lack of specific procedures for sexual harassment beyond general employment policies. In short, NI’s policy framework is <b>less robust</b> and appears to rely on standard HR processes (which may not offer the same level of specialized support or independence as the other legislatures).

Dimension	Scottish Parliament (Holyrood)	Westminster (UK Parliament)	Welsh Senedd (Welsh Parliament)	Northern Ireland Assembly
		<p>complicated. Northern Ireland Assembly policies are notably <b>less developed</b> in this area – no specialized harassment scheme and fewer detailed protocols. As a result, the review could not draw “best practice” lessons from NI’s current system.</p>		
<p><b>Reporting Mechanisms</b></p>	<p>Multiple channels in theory: <b>Line managers or MSPs, People &amp; Culture (HR)</b> for staff, <b>Member Services</b> for MSPs, and an <b>Independent Support &amp; Advocacy Service</b> (external) open to all. Anonymous reporting is possible through the external service. However, no single integrated “one-stop” reporting helpline. Usage of the external service is currently limited. Cultural barriers mean many incidents go unreported due to fear and perceived</p>	<p>The ICGS provides a <b>confidential helpline</b> operated by an independent charity (<b>Victim Support</b>) where staff or MPs can seek advice or start a complaint process. Complaints can then be investigated by independent investigators. The scheme ensures <b>anonymity and independence</b> in triaging and investigating cases, theoretically reducing fear of reprisals. In practice, the complexity of forms and processes can be a</p>	<p>Has a <b>24/7 “Unwelcome Behaviour” Support Line</b> that any staff or Member can call confidentially for advice or to report issues. Also employs <b>Contact Officers</b> and <b>Respect Mentors</b> – trained staff volunteers who serve as points of contact to discuss concerns and explain options. These Contact Officers gather information and can escalate patterns of issues to HR (anonymously) to spot trends. Formal complaints in the Senedd can be</p>	<p>Reporting largely follows <b>standard HR channels</b> – staff can report to line managers or the Assembly Commission’s HR department. There is <b>no dedicated external harassment hotline</b> or specialized unit for complaints. This means less confidentiality/independence in the process compared to other legislatures. Complaints against Members go through an Assembly standards commissioner</p>

Dimension	Scottish Parliament (Holyrood)	Westminster (UK Parliament)	Welsh Senedd (Welsh Parliament)	Northern Ireland Assembly
	<p>complexity. No internal network of contact persons at present (previous “Dignity at Work Advisers” program lapsed). Plans to improve ease of reporting (clear guidance, duty to report, possibly reintroducing internal advisors) are part of the recommendations.</p>	<p>barrier to reporting, and lengthy timelines may discourage complainants. Still, the existence of a well-publicized independent reporting line and procedure is a strength of Westminster’s system.</p>	<p>made through HR or management, but the presence of these support roles and an always-available helpline makes reporting more accessible. Anonymous complaints are accepted with the caveat that full anonymity can’t be guaranteed if action is to be taken. Overall, the Senedd emphasizes approachability in its reporting mechanisms.</p>	<p>process, but that is a formal route that might be daunting for staff. Thus, the mechanisms are relatively limited, which can discourage reporting.</p>
<p><b>Training &amp; Education</b></p>	<p><b>Limited recent training</b> – the last institution-wide training on harassment and respectful workplace behavior was in 2018. Not currently mandatory. Induction covers some points, and written guidance exists, but many newer MSPs/staff have not received dedicated training on these issues. No active bystander</p>	<p><b>Extensive training content</b> (Behaviour code training) was developed as part of the ICGS/“Valuing Everyone” initiative in 2018-2019, covering bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct for MPs and staff. Initially voluntary, it suffered from low uptake (many MPs did not attend). Subsequently, pressure grew to enforce</p>	<p>Provides training primarily via <b>induction programmes</b> for new Members and staff. The extent of dedicated harassment-prevention training in the Senedd is more limited than Westminster. However, the Senedd has initiatives like <b>“Respecting Others” guidance</b> and possibly</p>	<p>No specific information on training programs was noted in the review, implying that beyond general equality or dignity-at-work training as part of HR, there may not be a dedicated anti-harassment training requirement in the NI Assembly. Staff and Members likely receive basic induction on conduct, but there is <b>no</b></p>

Dimension	Scottish Parliament (Holyrood)	Westminster (UK Parliament)	Welsh Senedd (Welsh Parliament)	Northern Ireland Assembly
	<p>training or regular refreshers. The review identifies making training <b>mandatory and regular</b> as a priority going forward. Plans include training for all (MSPs, staff, MSP staff) before October 2026, focusing on practical understanding of unacceptable behaviours, how to report them, and how to intervene or seek help. Also recommended is specialized training for managers and Members on handling complaints and taking preventive action in their teams.</p>	<p>training: the House of Lords now requires new Peers to complete harassment training, and non-compliance is treated as misconduct. The review references that making training effectively mandatory (and even tying MPs' office funding to training completion) was recommended by an independent inquiry. Thus Westminster is moving toward <b>mandatory training</b> and has modules in place. Content covers the Behaviour Code, how to raise concerns, etc., and feedback from participants has been very positive in increasing awareness and confidence to act (99% of attendees reported greater confidence in calling out unacceptable behavior after training).</p>	<p>periodic workshops. The review did not indicate a large-scale mandatory training scheme in Wales, suggesting that this is an area under development. It's likely training is encouraged but not enforced. The Welsh Parliament's focus has been on clear guidance documents and policies, with an expectation that managers discuss these with their teams. Going forward, they may consider more formal training, especially as they observe Westminster's experience.</p>	<p><b>mandatory harassment training</b> reported. This suggests a training gap in comparison to emerging best practice.</p>

Dimension	Scottish Parliament (Holyrood)	Westminster (UK Parliament)	Welsh Senedd (Welsh Parliament)	Northern Ireland Assembly
<b>Support Services</b>	<p><b>Independent Support &amp; Advocacy Service (ISAS)</b> available to all (provides confidential advice, can be used anonymously). <b>Employee Assistance Programme</b> (counselling) also in place. Internally, <b>Member Services</b> (for MSPs) and <b>People &amp; Culture</b> (for staff) give advice but primarily on request. Currently <b>no internal peer support</b> volunteers (these existed in the past but not now). <b>Equality networks</b> exist for staff (e.g. networks for women, LGBTQ+ etc.) but not open to MSPs' personal staff. The review recommends expanding support: e.g. reintroducing <b>trained internal advisors/champions</b>, improving promotion of ISAS and counseling services, creating</p>	<p><b>Multiple support avenues:</b> The independent ICGS helpline (run by Victim Support) provides emotional support and advice. Westminster also set up a <b>Parliamentary HR support team for MPs' staff</b> in response to a 2019 review – a proactive HR department that staff of MPs can consult (since MPs are their direct employers). There are <b>staff networks</b> and welfare services internally, and access to counseling. Additionally, an <b>Independent Sexual Misconduct Advisory Service</b> was established for or historical cases. In Westminster, support and investigation are formally separated from the political line management, which encourages staff to seek help. However, due</p>	<p><b>Well-developed support system for a smaller legislature:</b> The Senedd offers a <b>24/7 support line</b> for reporting and advice. It has <b>Contact Officers and Respect Mentors</b> (trained staff volunteers) to talk to those with concerns. These officers can guide individuals through the process and even accompany them if needed. The Senedd also has <b>workplace equality networks</b> for various groups, and an <b>Engagement (ENGAGE) staff forum</b> that provides feedback on staff experiences. These mechanisms create multiple support touchpoints. Professional counseling or occupational health services are available as well. The presence of contact</p>	<p>Support structures are comparatively <b>basic</b>. Staff may have access to an Employee Assistance Programme for counseling. There is no indication of an independent advocacy service or dedicated advisors for harassment issues in the NI Assembly. Given the smaller size, employees likely rely on standard HR support or their line management. This means there may be gaps in confidentiality and specialized care for victims of harassment. The review suggests that, unlike the other legislatures, NI does not yet have notable support services tailored to these issues.</p>

Dimension	Scottish Parliament (Holyrood)	Westminster (UK Parliament)	Welsh Senedd (Welsh Parliament)	Northern Ireland Assembly
	<p>a <b>dedicated HR support for MSPs’ staff</b> similar to Westminster’s new staff HR hub, and possibly a 24/7 helpline. Also to involve <b>trade unions</b> in a constructive way as an added support channel (while protecting confidentiality).</p>	<p>to the scheme’s complexity, some staff still rely on trade unions or colleagues for support. Overall, support services are fairly robust, with the caveat that the bureaucratic process can be daunting.</p>	<p>officers who report trends to HR (without identifying individuals) helps the organisation respond to emerging issues while supporting individuals.</p>	
<p><b>Monitoring &amp; Oversight</b></p>	<p><b>Ad hoc at present.</b> There isn’t a regular public reporting on harassment incidents or actions in SP yet. Some data is collected (e.g. the independent support service logs anonymized trends to the HR Director), but overall risk monitoring is informal. The review noted the need for systematic <b>data analysis and reporting cycles</b> – recommending, for example, <b>biannual reviews of all harassment-related data</b>, and an <b>annual report</b> to summarize cases and</p>	<p><b>Formal and transparent monitoring.</b> Westminster publishes an <b>annual ICGS report</b> with statistics on complaints, investigation durations, outcomes, etc., for accountability. They have also implemented a <b>Quality Assurance process</b> (though the review found it added delay). A “Repeat Respondent Protocol” exists: if an MP is named in five separate complaints, the Speaker’s Office is alerted for a risk assessment. Cases involving MPs are overseen by independent</p>	<p><b>Active monitoring culture.</b> The Welsh Senedd takes a proactive stance on monitoring workplace culture. They conduct “<b>Dignity and Respect</b>” <b>pulse surveys every 18 months</b> to gauge the prevalence of issues and staff confidence in the system. Contact Officers in the Senedd also play a role in monitoring: they compile <b>anonymous trend reports to HR</b> if they notice repeated issues in a particular area or involving a particular individual. The</p>	<p><b>Limited formal monitoring.</b> There is little evidence of regular analysis or public reporting of harassment issues by the NI Assembly. With fewer staff and members, issues may be handled on a case-by-case basis without aggregate reporting. There is an Assembly Commissioner for Standards who addresses complaints against Members, but for staff-on-staff or staff-on-member issues, it’s unclear how trends are tracked. The review did not highlight</p>

Dimension	Scottish Parliament (Holyrood)	Westminster (UK Parliament)	Welsh Senedd (Welsh Parliament)	Northern Ireland Assembly
	<p>progress (similar to the ICGS Annual Report). No “repeat offender” tracking exists yet, but introducing a trigger if an individual is the subject of multiple complaints was suggested. Oversight of MSP misconduct is currently internal (Committee of MSPs), and the review advises adding more independent oversight to strengthen confidence.</p>	<p>investigators and ultimately by commissioners, adding external oversight. There is still criticism (even within Westminster’s reviews) that more could be done to improve timeliness and trust, but in terms of monitoring, Westminster is ahead: data is systematically collected and reviewed, and improvements are considered each year.</p>	<p>Senedd Commission (the governing body) can then address these patterns, for example with targeted interventions. The Senedd’s smaller size allows for a somewhat more personal oversight, but it still recognizes the need for formal checks – e.g. the Standards of Conduct Committee (with independent input) handles any formal cases involving elected Members. Public reporting specifically on harassment cases in the Senedd is limited (no dedicated annual report like ICGS yet), but the internal oversight mechanisms appear to be evolving.</p>	<p>any advanced monitoring or preventive programs from the NI Assembly, indicating this as an area for development.</p>

### **Zero Tolerance Statement**

The Parliament is a place of democratic participation, public service, and respectful engagement. People from diverse backgrounds come together to contribute to the legislative process and the wider work of Parliament. Everyone who works in, represents, takes part in, or visits Parliament plays a vital role in supporting an environment where all can participate safely and with confidence. Through their actions, each person helps to ensure that Parliament remains a safe and welcoming place for all.

The expectation is that all individuals must uphold the highest standards of conduct supporting a culture of dignity, courtesy, and respect throughout every aspect of parliamentary activity.

#### **Purpose**

This statement has regard to the established codes, policies, and procedures from Parliament and the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body (SPCB). It sets out the SPCB's expectations on the framework for conduct and behaviours across all parliamentary activities and interactions regardless of the role or capacity in which individuals engage with Parliament.

#### **Zero Tolerance approach**

The SPCB operates a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of unacceptable behaviour, including bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. This also includes all forms of hate crimes and hate incidents, reflecting our commitment to ensuring that everyone who works in, engages with, or visits Parliament can do so safely and with dignity, courtesy, and respect.

Zero tolerance means proactively preventing all forms of unacceptable and harmful behaviour and ensuring that any actions or consequences are appropriate and proportionate to the allegation and its impact.

This approach extends to everyone engaged with Parliament, including SPCB staff, Members, their staff, contractors, partners, interns, volunteers, work experience participants, other passholders, the public and other participants in parliamentary activity. By implementing this approach, the SPCB expects that everyone is held to the same high standards of conduct that the Parliament strives to uphold.

The SPCB will meet all legal and regulatory requirements and work to ensure our approach reflects best practice within the sector.

## **Behaviours expected of everyone**

All individuals are responsible for:

- Ensuring all interactions avoid language or actions that could be perceived as aggressive, abusive, intimidating, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, or motivated by discrimination or hatred.
- Exercising authority responsibly, with care and integrity, never misusing or abusing power.
- Avoiding any behaviour that could place others at risk of harm or create safeguarding concerns.
- Speaking up and raising concerns about unacceptable behaviour as soon as it feels safe to do so.
- Supporting and standing alongside others who choose to raise concerns and speak up.

## **Safeguarding Responsibilities**

Safeguarding is central to the SPCB's zero tolerance approach: the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adults is paramount. Everyone working with or within Parliament shares responsibility for upholding these standards and ensuring the safety and welfare of all. This includes our duty to actively protect others from harm and to comply with all relevant legal obligations, with particular attention given to the protection of children and vulnerable people.

## **A preventative approach**

The SPCB's zero tolerance approach is not solely reactive. It is also about preventing harm by setting clear expectations, promoting transparency, accountability, clear communication and ongoing improvement in all practices and policies.

## **Expectations of Employers at Parliament**

The SPCB recognises that achieving this approach relies on close partnership working with all employers across the Parliament. The SPCB will engage with all employers to actively uphold its zero-tolerance approach. This includes Members, Parliamentary Group Pools, contractors, partners, the Scottish Government, and other employing bodies.

Every employer at Parliamentary has a legal responsibility to establish robust systems—clear policies, appropriate training, effective risk assessments, and strong communication channels. Employers are expected to work collaboratively across Parliament to maintain consistent standards of conduct and safeguarding. The SPCB will ensure the necessary links and mechanisms are in place to support this shared responsibility while respecting lines of accountability.

## **Expectations of Visitors**

Visitors to Parliament are expected to uphold the same standards of behaviour required of all individuals working in Parliament. This obligation applies regardless of the purpose or duration of their visit. Throughout their time in a Parliament, every visitor must conduct themselves with dignity, courtesy, and respect in all interactions.

## **Expectations of Partners**

Partners are expected to uphold the same standards of behaviour required of all individuals working in Parliament and uphold the zero-tolerance approach. The SPCB will work with partners to support this shared responsibility while respecting lines of accountability.

## **Enforcement of SPCB's zero tolerance approach**

This statement is underpinned by the Code of Conduct for MSPs, along with the relevant codes, policies and procedures for staff and visitors. Together, they provide clear guidance and help uphold a culture grounded in dignity, courtesy, and respect.

Safeguarding concerns will be handled in line with legislation and national guidance, as set out in the SPCB's Safeguarding Policy.

Unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously, impartially, and independently, with effective sanctions applied where appropriate.

