Rules relating to Parliamentary passes for Members’ Staff, Parliamentary passes for UK Members of the European Parliament, and Parliamentary Security
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SECOND REPORT OF SESSION 2017–19

Rules relating to Parliamentary passes for Members’ Staff

1. The Sub-Committee on Lords’ Conduct, which was until recently responsible for keeping the Code of Conduct under review, wrote to us in early May regarding the level of awareness of the rules on the provision of passes by Members of the House to their staff. The rules on the use of facilities state that passes for secretaries and research assistants may be issued only to people who “genuinely and personally provide Parliamentary secretarial or research assistance” to the sponsoring Member, and Members must sign a declaration to this effect when applying for such a pass. A breach of this rule is a breach of the Code of Conduct and can be investigated by the Commissioner for Standards. Members’ staff, who number nearly 600, are required to register their outside interests.1

2. These passes provide the holder with privileged access to the whole of the Parliamentary Estate, as well as the right to bring in guests, hold a Parliamentary email address, access the Library and its services, use catering outlets and bars, and have a desk (subject to provision by whips). These are substantial privileges and we believe that it is necessary to strengthen the rules to ensure that only staff who regularly and frequently provide the sponsoring Member with Parliamentary support are entitled to have a pass. We also wish to underline the existing provision of the Code for Members’ Staff that they may not use those privileges “to further the interests of an outside person or body from whom they have received or expect to receive payment or other incentive or reward”.2

3. Accordingly, we propose that the following rule on security passes (agreed by the House in 2010) should be amended as indicated (new text in bold).

“A member may apply for a security pass for their spouse or civil partner; for up to three passes for their secretaries and research assistants; for passes for their carers; and, with Black Rod’s approval, for a pass for a driver employed specifically to drive them. Passes may only be granted under the second category to people who genuinely and personally provide Parliamentary secretarial or research assistance to the sponsoring member on a regular and frequent basis. Such

1 The Register is available to view online at www.parliament.uk/hlregister.
2 Code of Conduct for House of Lords Members’ Staff, paragraph 10.
passholders must use their Parliamentary pass only to provide Parliamentary support to one or more Members of the House, and not in furtherance of any other interests of their own or of other organisations for which they work. Members may not sponsor a pass for anybody whose primary role is to support an All-Party Parliamentary Group.”

4. The wording on the pass application forms and registration forms will be updated to reflect this new wording, and Members will in future be required to give brief details of the nature of the work which the passholder will undertake for them.

5. If the House agrees to this proposed change, the Registrar will write to all Members who sponsor staff passes to set out the amended rules and ask them to confirm that they are in compliance with them. In recognition of the fact that some Members may need time to adjust their existing arrangements, we propose that there should be a one-off grace period lasting until the House returns from the anticipated conference recess in October. While the revised rules would have immediate effect, the Commissioner would have regard to that grace period in considering any relevant complaints against Members of the House.

6. The House is invited to agree to the amendment to the rules on eligibility for Members’ staff passes as set out in paragraph 3.

Parliamentary passes for UK Members of the European Parliament

7. United Kingdom Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are entitled to a Parliamentary pass issued by the House of Lords and access to Peers’ Lobby, the Galleries of the House, the Committee Corridor, the offices of the European Union Committee and the Peers’ Guest Room. The House of Commons removed similar rights from UK MEPs in 2009. At that time, the House of Lords chose not to follow the House of Commons.

8. We consider that the position of the two Houses should now be aligned. This fits with wider changes to the pass system designed to simplify and streamline the number and categories of passes.

9. For the sake of clarity, we stress that this change would not affect Members of the House who are elected as UK MEPs. While such Members are disqualified from the House while they sit in the European Parliament, they retain the right to apply for a Parliamentary pass and access to certain facilities of the House.

10. We accordingly recommend that UK MEPs should no longer be entitled to passes to the House. The rights of access granted to Members of the House who are elected as MEPs would not be altered by this recommendation.

Parliamentary passes and Parliamentary Security

11. The security of Parliament continues to be of paramount importance. The Parliamentary Security Department and the Metropolitan Police work hard to keep Parliament safe and open for business, but security is everyone’s responsibility. Parliament faces a range of security threats of varying nature, likelihood and potential impact. They include terrorism, violent attack, intimidation, hostile intelligence, and disruptive protest. All passholders
must work together to create an environment that minimises risks and keeps Parliament secure.

12. **Possessing a Parliamentary pass is a privilege which comes with significant responsibilities.** We underline the importance of everyone in Parliament wearing their passes when on the Parliamentary Estate and note that anyone failing to display a security pass is liable to challenge.