

# Information Standards



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

Room 241,  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast, BT4 3XX

**Tel:** +44 (0) 28 9052 1147  
**e-mail:** [foi@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:foi@niassembly.gov.uk)

Our Ref: Fol18-19

Mr H Etherington  
[request--579781-2aaf283f@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request--579781-2aaf283f@whatdotheyknow.com)

5 July 2019

Dear Mr Etherington,

## **Freedom of Information Act 2000**

I can confirm that the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission holds information relevant to your request of 31 May 2019. In your request, you asked for the following information:

- “1. The number of staff employed by MLAs over the last five years.
2. The direct costs for providing a catering service for the Northern Ireland Assembly over the last five years.”

Financial support for Members towards staffing costs is provided for under Part 4 of the [Assembly Members \(Salaries and Expenses\) Determination \(Northern Ireland\) 2016 \(as amended\)](#). The Determination sets the maximum amount that Members may recover for support staff costs and places a number of other restrictions on Members in terms of the pay scales, grades and number of staff that may be employed. This Determination has been effective from May 2016.

Prior to May 2016, financial support to Members was provided under the provisions of the [Northern Ireland Assembly Members' Salaries, Allowances, Expenses and Pensions Determination March 2012](#) and subsequent amendments. This Determination set a maximum amount of Office Cost Expenditure and Members had discretion as to what admissible expenditure was recovered. While there were restrictions placed on the number of family members who could be employed, there were no restrictions on the pay scales, the grades or the number of staff that were employed.

The amount recovered for staff costs up to 28 February 2019 can be viewed on the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission website. Please click [here](#) to access this information.

The number of people employed by Members will change from month to month due to normal factors such as resignations, retirements and recruitment. The table overleaf sets out the number of people employed by Members as at 31 March in

each financial year for each of the past five years. These figures are NOT based on Full Time Equivalent members of staff; they are the actual number of people employed by Members.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>As At</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>
2014/15	31-Mar-15	362
2015/16	31-Mar-16	368
2016/17	31-Mar-17	279*
2017/18	31-Mar-18	221
2018/19	31-Mar-19	233
* The implementation of the Assembly Members (Salaries and Expenses) Determination (Northern Ireland) 2016 limited the hours per week and the number of Full Time Equivalent employees that each Member could employ.		

I wish to advise you that in relation to question 2, the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission requires that catering services be provided during business hours and for events / functions and public dining. Where the cost of providing these services exceeds the monies taken in, the extra operating cost is incurred by the Commission.

The following table shows the direct costs of providing a catering service for the Northern Ireland Assembly over the last five financial years.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Catering</b>
2014/15	£256,580.07
2015/16	£279,052.50
2016/17	£298,346.76
2017/18	£290,107.63
2018/19	£229,237.02

Should you wish to discuss this matter by telephone, please contact me directly on (028) 90521147. Alternatively, if you wish to suggest a convenient time to call, I am happy to contact you by telephone.

If you feel that the information we have provided does not meet your request fully, please contact this office as soon as possible. You have the right to request a formal review by the Northern Ireland Assembly Commission and if you wish to do so, please write to me at the above address.

If after such an internal review you are still unhappy with the response, you have the right to appeal to the Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF who will undertake an independent review.

If you have any queries about this letter, please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above.

Yours sincerely

*Martina Dalton*

**MARTINA DALTON**

Information Standards and Data Protection Officer