

12 February 2026

Dear

ATISN 26566 – Special Advisers

Thank you for your request which I received on 13 January 2026. You asked for the following information:

1. *Who was paid: the number of individuals who received severance in each round (May 2024 and August 2024), and their names/roles, or an anonymised table that distinguishes recipients.*
2. *What was paid and repaid: for each round, the gross severance awarded, any deductions, the element attributable to untaken annual leave, and any repayments made on re-appointment (with dates and amounts).*
3. *What is outstanding: confirmation of any severance sums still outstanding for repayment, with the recovery timetable and mechanism.*
4. *Month-by-month headcount: a table for April 2024 – March 2025 showing the monthly number of special advisers by headcount, indicating the count on the Standard and Senior pay bands in each month.*
5. *Context: a short note on any policy or contractual changes during the year that materially affected severance liabilities or staffing levels.*

Our response

The Special Adviser contract of employment sets out conditions in which employment will automatically terminate. It states:

Your employment will automatically terminate on the earliest of the following dates or events:

- i. when [name of First Minister] ceases to hold the ministerial office in relation to which you were appointed to assist him/her; or
- ii. the date the Cooperation Agreement comes to an end; or [a specific inclusion for Special Advisers employed under the Cooperation Agreement].
- iii. on the dissolution of Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament prior to a general election of Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament (except where you have the express agreement of the First Minister to continue in post); or
- iv. at the end of the day after the day of the general election of Senedd Cymru/Welsh Parliament following your appointment.

If your employment is automatically terminated in any of the circumstances set out above, you are entitled to a severance payment calculated in accordance with paragraph 18c. This is subject to your agreement that should you be reappointed as a special adviser you will repay your severance pay less the amount of salary you

would have been paid had you been employed during the period between the termination of your previous contract and your re-appointment on a fresh contract.

Paragraph 18c sets out:

If termination occurs at any time during the first year of service, you will receive three months' pay. You will receive a month's pay for each additional completed year of service after the first year, subject to an overall maximum of six months' pay. If you have been re-appointed as soon as practicable following an earlier appointment then any service accrued in your previous appointment(s) will be included in the calculation.

In response to the specific questions asked. Below is an anonymised table showing the total number of Special Advisers who received severance payments in May 2024 and August 2024. For each severance round, the table lists the total gross severance payment, the total amount paid for untaken annual leave, total repayments made (with dates), and the current outstanding balance.

In summary:

- **Who was paid:** There were 4 recipients of severance payments in May 2024 and 12 in August 2024. Because of the low number of recipients, we have aggregated the data to avoid individuals being identified which may be possible if the information is detailed by individual recipient.
- **What was paid and repaid:** The table details the total gross severance, total payments for untaken annual leave, and total repayments (with dates).
- **What is outstanding:** There are no outstanding balances and the repayment dates are shown for those who were re-appointed and required to repay severance.

This table provides an anonymised summary of all requested information.

May 2024

	Termination Date	Gross sever- ance payment	Payment for untaken an- nual leave	Severance to be repaid	Date sev- erance re- paid	Out- stand ing Bal- ance
4 Recipients	17/05/2024	£48,122.35	£3,892.71	£0.00	N/A	£0.00

August 2024

	Termination date	Gross Sever- ance Payment	Payment for untaken an- nual leave	Severance to be repaid	Date sev- erance re- paid	Out- stand ing Bal- ance
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12 Recipients	06/08/2024	£284,698.80	£18,450.34	£66,695.65	2 recipients repaid on 13/5/25; 1 repaid on 5/2/26.	£0.00
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A table to show the month-by-month headcount for April 2024 – March 2025, the monthly number of special advisers by headcount, indicating the count on the Standard and Senior pay bands in each month can be found as part of the Special Adviser Annual Report 2024-25 - <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/inline-documents/2025-12/Special%20Advisers%20in%20post%20during%20the%20period.pdf>

There were no policy or contractual changes during the year that materially affected severance liabilities. The first change affecting staffing levels in 2024-25 was the end of the Co-operation Agreement with Plaid Cymru in May 2024 which saw the four Plaid Cymru Special Advisers leave the organisation and receive severance payments. The change of First Minister in August 2024 saw an initial decrease in the number of Special Advisers and then a gradual rise in headcount, although several new Special Advisers were part time so the full time equivalent figure remained fairly consistent with the immediate post Co-operation Agreement period.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's

Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

or e-mail: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow

Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Website: www.ico.org.uk

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Yours sincerely