



IPSA Bulletin

Issue 14: 10 September 2010

We welcome feedback on the Bulletin. Please email comments and suggestions to info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk.

End of Grace Period and Publication of Expenses

Over the summer, IPSA has operated a grace period during which claims determined to be outside the rules would not be proactively published. We introduced this grace period to allow MPs time to become familiar with the system.

As you may be aware, we have said this period of grace will end this week. To be precise, the grace period ends on Tuesday 14 September. Please note that **any claims refused between 7 May and 14 September will not be proactively published**, unless there has been a clear attempt to transgress the rules, in which case the claim will not be paid and **will** be published.

We will be writing to you early next week to give further details on the handling of claims post-grace period, as well as a checklist of things you can do to ensure that valid claims are approved.

We are also aware that there has been some uncertainty about the timing of publication of claims. We have been asked if we are publishing claims online from next week. We are not. Claims will be published but not until after the House returns following the conference season. We will give MPs notice of the specific date from when claims will be made available online in due course.

IPSA Service Changes

Last week we sent a letter to all MPs from our Chief Executive, Andrew McDonald, setting out some changes and simplifications to the service we provide. In order to communicate these changes as widely as possible, we felt it would be useful to include the same information here.

Payments to landlords

IPSA will make payments to MPs' landlords directly for the rental charges on constituency offices and residential accommodation. In order to maintain control and meet audit requirements, we will ask MPs to declare every six months that the leases remain in force. IPSA will, of course, need to agree any new contracts.

Wider use of travelcards

A further service change we are making is to extend the use of the IPSA travelcard to allow it to be used as a payment card for a small number of items of expenditure, including council tax bills and certain utility bills. In all of these cases, IPSA will be able to maintain close audit arrangements.

Payment against invoices

Another simplification will be to expand the current arrangement whereby IPSA pays expenses on the submission of invoices, rather than waiting for receipts. IPSA currently allows payment on the basis of submission of invoices for a small number of categories of expense (for more information please see our evidence requirements online). In future all expenses over £200 will be payable on the submission of an invoice. All such claims will be subject to the same verification as any other claim, and will require the subsequent submission of supporting evidence and receipts within one month of the claim being made.

These changes will be introduced from November.

Employers and Public Liability Insurance

The House of Commons currently provides employer's and public liability insurance for MPs centrally, details of which are in the House's *Working to Protect You* brochure. This cover runs out at the end of September, but the cover will be continued by IPSA for the remainder of this financial year. This means that there is **no need** for Members to purchase their own cover and any expenses claim for such purchases will not be paid. Further information on this issue will be sent to MPs next week.

The Online Expenses System

We are aware that some users had problems accessing the online system recently, and apologise for the inconvenience this may have caused. We are investigating this and our IT team conducted work over the last weekend to prevent it happening in the future.

Staff Training

There are still places on the remaining MP staff training sessions. Staff can book onto one of the sessions below by calling the IPSA training helpline on 020 3334 3377 or by emailing training@parliamentarystandards.org.uk. The training helpline is open daily from 09:00 to 17:00. If you leave an 'out of hours' message, it would be very helpful if you could provide the following information: staff member's name, name of MP, staff contact telephone number, staff email address.

The current staff training sessions are as follows:

13 October – London

15 November – London

7 December – London

If you live outside London and would like to express interest in a training session in your area, please email or call the training helpline. Courses will be run according to the level of demand.

Payment of Expenses and Salaries

IPSA's online expenses and finance systems have been set up to enable approved expenses to be paid into MPs' bank accounts **throughout** the month. This means that there is no monthly or weekly cut-off date.

Please note, however, that the monthly cut-off date for IPSA's **salary** payroll is the 15th, or if this falls on a non-working day, the last working day before that.

IPSA Bulletins, Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions in the Members' Centre

Paper copies of these Bulletins, our latest Scheme guidance document and our frequently asked questions are now available from the Members' Centre in Portcullis House. Alternatively, these can be found on our website.

Contacting IPSA

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