

IPSA's Top Tip

You can use the 'notes' column to give an explanation supporting a claim and this can be particularly helpful in support of expenses incurred in unusual circumstances.

This helps us to make a quick decision on your claim, and means there is less likelihood that we need to ask for more information.

This week's news:

Tube Strike

In light of today's Tube strike and related temporary public transport disruption, we would like to set out our position on taxi claims. We realise that MPs may be required to stay at the House until the close of business and that we don't know what time Parliament will rise tonight. IPSA doesn't want to contribute to any disruption caused to Parliamentary business by the Tube strike. So MPs who confirm they need a taxi this evening to allow them to complete their Parliamentary duties, may claim for one. This is an exceptional provision. When submitting your claim it is important that the circumstances are explained clearly in the 'Notes' section.

Streamlining our processes

As you know, IPSA is looking at ways to streamline the way it does things and to that end, this weekend we introduced three significant steps.

a) Payments to landlords

The first of these changes will see IPSA 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.

b) Wider use of travelcards

We are extending the use of the IPSA travelcard to allow it to be used as a credit card for a small number of items of expenditure, including council tax, business rates and utilities, including water, electricity, gas and non-automotive fuels.

c) Payment against invoices

The third change will be to expand the arrangement whereby IPSA pays expenses on the submission of invoices, rather than waiting for receipts. We currently allow payment on the basis of submission of invoices for a small number of categories of expense. 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.

Further details on these changes and guidance should you wish to take advantage of them are available on our website.

Changes to the Online Expenses System

This weekend, we also introduced some changes to the terminology used on the system about claims not paid. If you have comments on these changes, or any other areas of the system that you feel can be improved, please email system.improvements@parliamentarystandards.org.uk.

Contingency Payments

In recent weeks we have received a number of queries about contingency payments and the circumstances in which you can apply for these.

If you are concerned about performing your duties within your remaining budgets, you can make a claim for a contingency payment to cover expenses, or liability for expenditure that is:

- not covered by one of the other budgets set out in the Expenses Scheme; **or**
- exceeds any financial limit set out in the Scheme.

To support the claim, you should demonstrate that the expenditure was or will be necessary to allow you to carry out your Parliamentary duties. The majority of applications for contingency payments to date have been for staffing or CORE, but they can be for GAE as well. For example, MPs newly elected this year may have found that the costs associated with setting up a new office – buying office furniture, for example, or computer equipment – have put considerable strain on their GAE budget. In these circumstances, we will consider contingency applications to cover excess costs.

You can check how much of your budget you have already spent by using the ‘reports’ on the online expenses system. From your homepage select ‘standard reports’ then select ‘monthly overview vs budget’. This will show you the amount of money that you have spent against your budget, and also the percentage spent.

Parking

We also want to clarify the rules regarding parking costs. MPs can claim for the costs of residential parking (i.e. parking for the residence for which you are claiming accommodation expenses) and office parking under travel and subsistence.

You can also claim office parking for your staff from travel and subsistence, if they use the car for travelling around the constituency in support of your work.

However, you should not claim office parking for either yourself or your staff if it is solely for the daily commute to and from the office. Please use the ‘Notes’ column of your claim to state the purpose for which you or your member of staff are using the car e.g. constituency work.

Don't forget...

Utility bills

All utility bills sent to us need to show the name and address clearly, and the billing period. For this reason, please send us the entire bill, rather than just the first page.

And finally...

Receipts

When you send in evidence of journeys taken in support of your payment card claims, please send in the original receipts, rather than the travelcard statement, which is for your information only.

Contacting IPSA

Phone: IPSA Information Line: 020 7811 6400
(Opening hours 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday)

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Post: IPSA, 7th floor, Portland House, Bressenden Place, London,
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