

Update on Advisory Services

From Tuesday 6 July, we will be providing one-to-one help on logging on and using the online system for the first time. These short sessions can be arranged to take place at our documentation centre at 1 Parliament Street or at an MP's office. To book, please phone our information line on 020 7811 6400. In September, we will be providing face-to-face advice on the scheme and its application to individual circumstances.

Accommodation Expenses and Travel Expenses for Non-London Area MPs

MPs will be aware that IPSA is currently consulting on a number of amendments to the MPs expenses scheme rules. The consultation closes on 7 July. One of the anomalies that we are proposing to address is that the scheme does not currently allow an MP who owns their property and does not claim the mortgage interest subsidy to claim for associated expenses like council tax and utility bills.

Until any change to the rules, this must remain the position. So MPs who own their property and do not claim mortgage interest subsidy, will not be reimbursed for associated costs. However, subject to the outcome of the consultation, any costs incurred since 7 May will be claimable following the propose rule change.

There is a knock-on effect for any non-London Area MPs who are not in receipt of accommodation expenses, either through choice, or through the anomaly described above. This is that they cannot claim for travel between their constituency home and Westminster (although they can claim for travel between their constituency office and Westminster and can also claim the London Area Living Payment). Again, the consultation seeks to address this anomaly and claims back to 7 May will be reimbursed, if the proposed rule changes take place following consultation.

Hotel and Subsistence Claims for MPs' Staff

Under the current rules, MPs can submit a claim for a staff member's hotel costs and subsistence when, for example, attending a training event, under general administrative expenditure. See paragraph 10.4(d)(i) of the scheme. However, one of the proposals in the current consultation on the scheme is that they should be able to claim for these costs under travel and subsistence, which would mirror what MPs can claim for themselves. Subject to the consultation, the changes to the rules should come into force in late July.

Contingency Payments for Hotel Costs

The expenses scheme already has rules to help MPs when Parliament is sitting after 11pm and in some cases, 1am. See paragraphs 7.32-7.34 of the scheme. However, we have become aware that it is hard for some MPs, whose constituencies are on the boundaries of the London Area, to get public transport back to their homes by a reasonable hour when Parliament sits late, but rises before 11pm. In these circumstances IPSA will consider, on a case-by-case basis, whether to reimburse the cost of a hotel under the contingency arrangements. As usual, the cost of the hotel will be subject to an upper limit of £130 per night.

Maternity, Paternity and Redundancy Pay

We have received a number of queries about maternity pay and other similar costs, therefore we wish to make it clear that IPSA will pay any necessary expenditure on maternity, paternity or adoptive leave for MPs' staff. We will also pay for the cost of cover to replace the staff member on leave, provided the cover meets the normal Scheme rules. This is paid from the contingency fund – not because we are exercising discretion on whether to make these payments, but so that these payments do not impact on your capped staffing budget.

IPSA Consultations – Closing Date 7 July

On 16 June we launched the three public consultations below:

1. *Amendments to the MPs' Expenses Scheme Rules*
2. *IPSA's Publication Proposals*
3. *The Compliance Officer*

The closing date for all responses is Wednesday 7 July. You can view each consultation on the IPSA website at www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk, and can respond using the email addresses at the end of each document, or the postal address at the end of this Bulletin.

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.

Training for MPs' Staff

To date, over 350 members of staff have booked onto IPSA's training sessions, which run until early July.

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 schedule for the remaining staff training sessions is as follows:

Monday 5 July - London

One session at 09:30

Thursday 8 July - London

Two sessions at 09:30 and 13.15

Friday 9 July - London

One session at 13.15

Thursday 22 July – London

One session at 13.15

Friday 23 July – London

One session at 13.15

We will be running further sessions in London and throughout the country in due course. The dates and times of these sessions will be available on our website and communicated through these bulletins.

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

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

Tribunals Service

Members may want to be aware of the Tribunals Service's public consultation on proposed amendments to the Tribunals Procedure (First-tier Tribunal) (Tax Chamber) Rules 2009. The consultation will consider how MPs might appeal against decisions made by the Compliance Officer for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority. Appeals from MPs' expenses cases will be made to the Tax Chamber of the First-tier Tribunal. The consultation also seeks views on minor changes affecting all cases in the Tax Chamber. For more information visit the Tribunals Service's website at

www.tribunalservice.gov.uk/tribunals/rules/tribunalprocedurecommittee.htm

Please feel free to share this Bulletin with colleagues and staff members.

Contacting IPSA

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