

This week's news:

Allowing proxies to submit claims

The revised Edition of the MPs' Expenses Scheme allows MPs to delegate authority to their designated proxy to submit claims, should they wish to do so. Irrespective of whether an MP or their proxy submits the claim, the MP concerned remains responsible for all claims submitted in his or her name.

MPs may continue to submit claims personally.

MPs who wish to delegate this authority to their proxy should complete the 'submission of claims by proxies' form and return it to us. The form will be available on our website shortly, under the 'IPSA for MPs' tab and the 'Human resources, staffing and forms' section.

Once we have confirmed that we have received and accepted the form, the proxy will be able to submit claims by using the MP's gold tagged RSA token.

For your own records, we recommend that whoever submits the claim – MP or proxy – initials the claim in the notes field to make clear who made the submission.

Alternative Vote referendum

We have received questions from some MPs about using their publicly funded website (or other material) to campaign for the upcoming referendum on the Alternative Vote.

The expenses Scheme is designed to reimburse costs incurred by MPs in carrying out their parliamentary functions only. Chapter six (para 6.6 (f)) of the Scheme sets out that producing or publishing any material which could be construed as campaign expenditure within the scope of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 may not be claimed.

As such, IPSA funded material should not be used to campaign for or against the Alternative Vote in the upcoming referendum.

Reward and recognition

MPs can claim modest reward and recognition payments for their staff. These payments may take the form of a voucher or small gift, for example.

If you are considering awarding a modest reward and recognition payment, you should think about the following points:

- The awards can reward and recognise the contribution a staff member has made to the performance of your parliamentary functions.
- These awards cannot be made to connected parties.
- The payments come from your Staffing Expenditure budget, so you must plan them into your expected costs for that budget. The budget has an overall limit of £115,000.
- The payments must be modest. It is for you to decide what is 'modest'. You should apply a 'common sense' definition.
- Each year, we will publish the total claimed by each MP for reward and recognition payments, broken down by employee (the employees will not be named). This is in addition to the routine publication of all claims, which will include these payments.

If you decide to award a modest reward and recognition payment to a staff member, then you should do the following:

- Make the payment. Claims cannot be made in advance for reward and recognition payments.
- If you have awarded a voucher, small gift or similar, you should submit a claim on the expenses system. Please specify which member of staff received payment. Please then submit the receipt as the evidence for the claim, attached to the barcode as usual.
- If you have awarded a modest cash payment to your staff member, print out the Reward and Recognition Payment form, which will be available shortly on IPSA's website. Fill this in, ensuring both you and the recipient staff member sign and date it. Once you have done so, submit the claim using the expenses system and send the form as evidence, attached to the barcode in the usual way.

Contacting IPSA

Phone: IPSA Information Line: 020 7811 6400 (Opening hours 1pm-5pm, Monday to Friday)

Email: info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk

Post: IPSA, 7th floor, Portland House, Bressenden Place, London, SW1E 5BH

Website: www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk