

26 May 2015

Staff contracts online tool

We have developed an online tool to help you to create automated employment contracts which you can [access here](#). The tool speeds up the process of creating contracts, and is particularly useful if you need to create a contract for a part-time member of staff because it automatically calculates the individual's pro-rated hours, pay and holiday entitlements. Further guidance on using the tool can be found on the [FAQs document here](#). There is also a [step-by-step guide to the process for getting a new member of staff on to the payroll here](#).

We were really grateful to all those who helped test the tool before the Election and we had positive feedback that it is easy to use. There are a couple of things which have arisen during the testing process which you may want to be aware of when you are using the tool:

- As with all web-based tools, we cannot guarantee it will work with every browser or with some individual settings on the device you are using;
- when entering the job title, you need to select a "Job Family" before selecting the job title;
- once you've created the PDF version of the contract, you *must* save it if you want to keep it; if you don't, you will need to re-enter the data;
- when you've entered the data, you need to press the "Validate Preview" button *before* the "Create Contract" button.

To help us continually improve the tool if you do get an error message, please can you take a screen print of it and send it to info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk. More general feedback is also very welcome and we will take it into account in future releases of the tool.

Training

We are running a series of seminars for MPs and MPs' staff on the MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses (the Scheme). If you are a new MP or returning, or work for an MP, the short session will provide you with an opportunity to hear about the main elements of the Scheme, what you are eligible to claim for and ask any questions.

The Scheme seminars are being held in Westminster on:

Tuesday 2 June	Committee room 8	11.00 am to 11.45am
Wednesday 3 June	Committee room 8	2.00pm to 2.45pm
Tuesday 9 June	Committee room 8	11.00 am to 11.45am
Wednesday 10 June	Committee room 6	2.00pm to 2.45pm

IPSA have produced some useful guidance videos on a variety of topics including how to submit a claim and review budget reports. These and more information on training can be found at www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk

Business rates relief

Many MPs benefit from business rates relief. This is a credit or discount against the business rates you pay for your office accommodation and is available from many local authorities. If you have not already done so, contact the Rates Department of your local authority to see whether you qualify. There are different criteria under which you may be eligible and in some circumstances, up to 50% relief may be available.

If you receive a refund for any rates that you have already paid, once repaid to us, it will be available for you to spend this financial year.

Train strike and claiming for travel

As you will be aware, there was national train strike planned for last week that was cancelled. In light of this, we thought that it would be useful to outline what MPs must consider if this happens in future with relation to travel claims. We realise that any strike has the potential to impact on many MPs' usual plans to return to Westminster by train, or to travel across the city.

If this is the case, please be reminded that under the MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses you are eligible to claim travel from your constituency (if outside of London) to Westminster. You can use other forms of transport (e.g. coach) and can also claim mileage, if you use your own vehicle.

Please, as always, bear in mind the most cost-effective type of travel and value for money when purchasing tickets.

You can find a useful guide on travel and subsistence on [our website](#) that will give you more details.

IPSA Contact Details

Phone: IPSA Information Line: 020 7811 6400 (Open currently from 9am – 6pm)

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