



13 October 2014

Dear MP/Member of staff

IPSA's support to MPs and their staff

When I wrote to introduce myself in June, I said one of my priorities would be to improve the support we provide to MPs and their staff. The first change we implemented was to extend the opening hours of our telephone support line. I'm pleased that this change has been well-received and is working well.

Over the summer, I have looked at other changes that we can introduce to make things easier for you and to improve our support. This work has been informed by the results of our survey of MPs and your staff, by my conversations with MPs, and by our own work to scrutinise and improve our systems and processes.

Today I'm pleased to inform you of six further steps to improve our support.

1. Extending use of the Payment Card

Many of you asked that we open up the Payment Card so it can be used with all suppliers. That is what we have done. You can now use the Payment Card to purchase any item within the MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses.

2. Personal financial statements

You also told us that you would welcome more support in keeping control of your forecast costs. You can already access reports online to see all the details of your expenditure to date, but we will send you a personal, year-to-date financial statement within the week.

This statement will tell you how much you have claimed in each budget, and how much you have available for the rest of the financial year. It will also tell you if you have overspent any budget or if you have loans from IPSA which need to be repaid before the end of this Parliament. I hope you find these statements helpful in your planning and budgeting for the second half of the financial year.

3. Training and how-to guides

Some of you asked for more support and guidance on the claiming process. Our website now has updated 'how-to' guides, designed to help you and your staff to make claims. I am grateful to our

MPs' staff user group for the feedback we received to help us improve these documents. [Click here](#) to access the guides.

I am also keen to provide any training needed. If you or your team would benefit from training in any aspect of our process, please let us know and we will arrange it.

4. Drop-in sessions

You also asked to be able to meet members of the IPSA team more regularly face-to-face. So from Wednesday 15 October, we will hold drop-in sessions in the House of Commons to explain in more detail any aspect of the Scheme or the online expenses system. These sessions will run every Wednesday until Christmas recess, on the first floor of Portcullis House (Interview Room 1 or 2) from 9am-5pm.

5. Car-registration process

We have also simplified the process for claiming for car mileage. You will no longer have to complete a form to register your car with us before claiming, and when making a claim you will no longer need to tell us which car you used. This does not change the rules on the journeys which you can claim for.

6. Quick guide to the Scheme

Finally, some of you have noted that the *MPs' Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses* is too long to digest. While we must of course have a comprehensive document to describe the Scheme in detail, I agree that a short summary would be helpful both for MPs and your staff. So we have produced a 10-page summary that describes the main features of the Scheme and explains some of the rationale behind it. Here is the link to that Summary on our website – [Summary of the Scheme](#). This document is not a replacement for the Scheme, but is intended to be an accessible and quick guide to it.

I hope you find these six improvements to our support helpful; I'd welcome your feedback.

In addition, I am glad that many of you have said that you value the contact you have with our telephone support team and the advice and guidance they offer. I am also implementing a thorough training and development programme for these staff so that we constantly improve how we work, and the support you receive.

As I say, many of these improvements are the direct result of comments that you and your staff made in our summer survey. If you would like to look at the results, and our response to them, in more detail, please follow this link - [Annual Survey results](#). I am, of course, happy to take any further comments on our work at any time.

Yours sincerely,



Marcial Boo
Chief Executive

Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA)
4th Floor
30 Millbank
London
SW1P 4DU

Telephone: 020 7811 6473

E-mail: marcial.boo@parliamentarystandards.org.uk

Website: www.parliamentarystandards.org.uk