

Campaign activities: further guidance for MPs on claims, repayments for office costs and adjustments to staff pay

Summary

IPSA has issued guidance on what costs MPs can claim for during the dissolution period. As a general rule, IPSA-funded resources must not be used for electoral purposes – this includes people, travel and hotels, office space, utilities, or office supplies and equipment. To do so may be a criminal offence under campaign expenditure legislation. For further information about electoral campaign legislation please go to the [Electoral Commission website](#).

This document provides more detail to help you to comply with this

The detailed processes are set out below but here's a summary of the key points and actions you may need to take:

- Your staff may only campaign in their own time. If they campaign during normal working hours they must take annual leave, unpaid leave or time off in lieu. Given the likely external interest in campaign activities, we strongly encourage you to keep your own records of these arrangements.
- If your staff are taking unpaid leave, you need to tell us before they undertake the campaigning, and no later than the 15th of the month, so that we can adjust their pay accordingly. If you tell us after the campaigning or too late in the month for us to reduce the staff member's pay, we will make the reduction from the following month's salary.
- If you have claimed the cost of any office supplies or equipment from IPSA you must not use them for campaigning.
- If you have not yet claimed for any office supplies or equipment that you intend to use for campaigning you can only claim that proportion of the cost that relates to use of the supplies or equipment for your parliamentary functions.
- Do not use your Payment Card, Trainline, Chambers or the direct payment options for stationery to purchase anything that will be used for your campaign.
- If you use your office for campaign activities during normal office hours you should reduce the proportion of rent and utilities you claim for the period accordingly.
- If you use your office for campaign activities during normal office hours and we pay your landlord directly, you should send us a cheque to cover the proportion of the cost attributable to campaigning.

Do the processes in this guidance apply to me?

You may find it easiest simply to avoid using your office or equipment for electoral activities, and to ensure your staff use paid leave or their own time if they want to campaign.

If however:

- your staff plan to take unpaid leave to campaign, or inadvertently work on campaign activities during their normal working hours;
- you use your offices for campaigning within office hours; and/or
- you make a claim for an item which in whole or in part will be used for campaigning;

you will need to take the appropriate action below.

Making adjustments to staff pay

If any of your staff wish to do any campaigning activities (canvassing, writing party political speeches, stuffing envelopes etc) they must either:

- take unpaid leave;
- take annual leave;
- take time off in lieu; or
- do it outside of their normal working hours.

If staff are taking unpaid leave, you must tell us in advance (and by the 15th of the month) by completing the [‘Unpaid Leave Form’](#) on our website. This will ensure that the proper adjustments can be made to their pay. Please note you only need to contact us if your staff members choose to take unpaid leave: we don’t need to know about staff taking annual leave, time off in lieu or who are campaigning outside their normal working hours.

Given the high levels of external interest in campaign activities, we would strongly encourage you to keep your own records of these arrangements.

If, after the Election, you realise that your staff members did undertake campaigning activities while on paid IPSA time, you must either:

- arrange for the time to be deducted from their annual leave entitlement; or
- tell us so that we can make adjustments to their pay.

Please tell us about any adjustments to pay which need to be made after the General Election by completing the [‘Unpaid Leave Form’](#) on our website.

Where you are unable to tell us before the 15th of the month about a staff member’s plan to take unpaid leave, or you are telling us after the campaigning activity has taken place, we will deduct the appropriate amount from the individual’s pay for the following month.

Office costs

Office supplies and equipment

IPSA-funded office supplies or equipment which have already been claimed for **must not** be used for campaign-related purposes.

If you purchase office supplies or equipment which you anticipate will be used both for carrying out your parliamentary functions and for campaign purposes, you must only claim for the proportion which relates to your parliamentary functions. **For reimbursement claims, you can do this in the normal way by reducing the cost claimed by the appropriate amount.**

In line with our usual rules, you should not use your Payment Card or any of the direct payment options for purchasing office supplies (i.e. Banner, Commercial or XMA) for procuring any item which is to be used wholly or partly for campaign-related purposes.

Office accommodation

If you use your IPSA-funded office accommodation for campaign-related purposes (e.g. holding campaign planning meetings), and you claim your office rent on a reimbursement basis, your claims for funding will need to stop for the relevant period or you should claim only for the proportion of time you have used your office to carry out your parliamentary functions. **You can do this by reducing the amount claimed by the appropriate proportion.**

There is a slightly different procedure if you use the IPSA direct payment system to pay for office rent. As we pay the full rent to your landlord directly, **you will need to repay a relevant proportion** of your rent if you use your office for any political activity. So, if in a month you use 25% of the working hours for election campaigning purposes, you must repay to us a quarter of the rent for that month. **You can do this by sending us a cheque using the Repayments Form.**

We recognise that you may decide to make no claims for office accommodation during the Election period but still use your office to carry out work related to your parliamentary functions.

In line with our standard publication policy, IPSA will publish any repayments made for accommodation, and these will be linked to the original claim. The reasons for repayments are not published.

Travel and Subsistence

You may not claim from IPSA for any travel or subsistence costs (for you or your staff members) that you have incurred on election work. In accordance with our usual rules, you should not use Trainline, Chambers or your Payment Card to buy IPSA-funded travel for any other purpose than supporting you in your parliamentary functions.

Relocating staff based in Westminster to constituencies in the run-up to the Election

If a Westminster-based staff member is required to carry out parliamentary work in the constituency office, she or he can claim for travel to the constituency and necessary hotel costs. A staff member would only be able to claim for such costs for those nights that directly relate to parliamentary work. Such costs should not be claimed if any of the staff member's activities relate to election campaigning for the MP or party. If a staff member is campaigning at weekends or taking unpaid or annual leave on some days, the hotel stay for those nights is **not** claimable.

You should consider the most appropriate use of taxpayer funds and only claim for unavoidable costs. For example, you should be able to justify the unavoidable need to relocate a staff member to the constituency to conduct necessary work there.

Further information

As set out in the guidance, it is your responsibility as an MP and as a candidate to ensure that you do not use any IPSA-funded support for campaigning purposes. You will need to make a judgement on what level of reduction or repayment may be required based on your particular circumstances.

We are happy to provide further advice on the rules or on making claims. You can contact us at info@theipsa.org.uk or on 020 7811 6400.