**Situation in Afghanistan**

**Application for Exceptional Contingency Funding**

Please use this form to request additional funding to mitigate the impact of the situation in Afghanistan on constituency workloads. For other contingency applications, please follow the normal [process](https://www.ipsaonline.org.uk/guidance/requesting-extra-budget#applying-for-contingency-funding).

Applications will be considered against the following criteria:

* + **Exceptionality** – are the additional costs incurred as a result of the Afghanistan situation
	+ **Need** – is the staffing budget fully committed already (including the Covid uplift)?
	+ **Costs** – clarity on the additional costs incurred
	+ **Reasonableness –** balancing our duty to support MPs and our responsibilities for public funds

**Name**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **Constituency**: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Impact of the situation in Afghanistan** *Please outline how the office has been affected including approximate scale and complexity of additional casework*

**Your budgetary position** *Please provide information on your forecasted budget position for the rest of the year, and confirm that the Covid staffing budget uplift has been forecasted to be used*

**Request details** *Please tell us much you are requesting, and what it is for – an estimate is fine at this stage.*

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**GUIDANCE**

**Why is this being made available?**

We know that the situation in Afghanistan has had a significant impact on some of your constituency workloads, and that this is not simply additional work but it is also emotional and stressful.  We have heard from a number of Members that their staff have been working very long hours and over weekends and this past bank holiday in England and Wales.  We are keen to do what we can to support you and your staff during this time.

**What about other casework/pressure on offices?**

IPSA rolled over the extra staffing budget into this financial year in response to the pressures brought about by the pandemic. We will be considering budgets for 2022/23 later on this year but we believe that the exceptional workload situation in Afghanistan for some offices warrants further support now.

**What you need to tell us?**

For us to assess your application, we need to understand the impact of the situation in Afghanistan on your caseload and your staff. We know that numbers do not tell the whole story, as one case can take significantly longer than another but an indication of both the quantity and complexity of the Afghanistan cases will be helpful. Please note, what we need to consider is the amount of time spent dealing with *cases*, not policy correspondence or political commentary.

We will also need to have some detail on what is being applied for – both in cash terms and what it is being used for.  As an example, some of the offices we have spoken to wish to bid for exceptional contingency funding to pay overtime – in this case we need to know the names of those staff and an estimate of what hours roughly they will/have worked and will continue to work on a weekly basis how many hours and what budget is required to pay for that.  If you are as yet unsure about the full detail of what is required, please provide a broad estimate erring on the side of caution to avoid the possibility of needing to apply again.

**Your current budgetary position**

This special contingency funding is only available if there is no room in your current budgets. As well as wanting to support offices at this difficult time, we also have a duty for the sound use of public funds and so if there is room in the budgets already provided, this should be used for Afghanistan related expenditure. To be clear, this includes the extra funding available this year commonly known as the Covid staffing uplift. Contingency funds are limited and we need to make sure that any capacity in established budgets is used first.

It may not be straightforward to forecast your spend, and so you are encouraged to speak to the payroll team prior to making an application, so they can provide you with the latest position and advise on forecasting to the end of this financial year. The payroll team can be contacted at payroll@theipsa.org.uk

**What can exceptional contingency funding be used for?**

We know that things differ across offices and we will consider applications on a case by case basis, but as a rule of thumb anything that is permissible to be paid from the staffing budget would be ok. This includes staff overtime, additional hours for part time staff, welfare support for you or your staff or temporary staffing.

On overtime, we would like to remind you that excessive, on-going overtime is not advisable for wellbeing reasons and consideration also needs to be given to rules about working hours.  The House’s Members’ HR team (membershr@parliament.uk) would be happy to discuss this with you.

**Additional staffing**

It is important to note that any exceptional contingency funding is limited to this financial year – if for example you wanted to bring in temporary staff they would need to be time-limited as you would not be able to guarantee that budget would be available in the future to pay for them. Ahead of discussing your application with payroll, it would be helpful if you could give some thought to the role type, hours and salary of the post you are considering.

**Timescales**

We realise that although a significant amount of work has arisen for some offices over the past few weeks, there may be ongoing exceptional demand related to the situation in Afghanistan and so you may make more than one application depending on your circumstances.

In some cases exceptional contingency funding may be agreed in principle, but will not be applied to your budgets until closer to the end of the financial year once it is clearer what your office’s final financial position is. You would be able to make the agreed additional spending commitments straight away. This approach would usually apply if your latest forecast suggests that it may be possible for you to absorb the additional expenditure from within your existing staffing budget, but there is some uncertainty about that. It would avoid the need to publish budget uplifts that were not required.

**Publication**

In the interests of transparency and the appropriate use of public funds, any exceptional contingency funding will be published alongside your other claims and titled “Exceptional Contingency – Afghanistan”

**Further questions?**

As mentioned earlier, the payroll team are happy to speak to you about your application and for any more generic queries, please email info@theipsa.org.uk and your query will be sent on to the right team.