



July 2017

Findings from
the Annual
Survey of MPs
and their staff
2016

Introduction

This year, 366 people responded to our annual survey: slightly up from last year's 312 responses. This number comprised 35 MPs, down from 44 last year, 153 MP proxies (those nominated by an MP to act on their behalf to manage their business costs and expenses), up from 113 last year, and 178 non-proxy members of staff, up from 155 last year.

Continuing from last year, a distinction is made between proxies and ordinary staff members. This is to gauge any differences in opinions and experiences between proxies and ordinary members of staff. Although both groups interact with IPSA, their experiences are likely to be different due to a proxy's responsibilities acting directly on behalf of an MP. In this report, we have broken down the results to reflect the difference in opinion between the distinct groups.

Key findings – a summary

The survey shows some clear improvements from a year ago. There are many positives for IPSA to take from this survey:

- Our overall standing with proxies and staff was more positive this year than last: 57% of proxies thought our overall service was *Very good* or *Good*, up from 53% last year, with 49% of staff thinking the same, up from 45% last year.
- There were positive results from all three respondent types regarding IPSA's communications via letters, emails and bulletins. More than 60% of respondents in all three groups rated these communications as either *Very good* or *Good*, and all returned higher satisfaction rates for these methods of communication than last year.
- MPs and particularly Proxies were largely positive about the quality of the support that they received on the phone, with 51% and 79% respectively saying they were either *Very satisfied* or *Satisfied*.
- Although many respondents had not experienced face-to-face encounters, those who had, from all three respondent groups, were much more positive than negative about their experiences.
- MPs and proxies are widely using the direct payment facilities available to them and these facilities have proven popular. Every MP who answered the survey has used at least one of the direct payment options available to them and their office. Only 1% of proxies who responded have never used direct payment options.
- 50% of MPs are happy with the speed of our claims processing, as are 75% of their proxies.

At the same time, we are always looking to improve and to do more. The survey highlighted areas upon which IPSA can improve:

- MPs generally thought worse of IPSA's performance overall compared to last year. 40% of MPs who completed the survey thought our service was *Very good* or *Good*, down from 46% last year, whilst 40% thought it *Poor* or *Very Poor*, up from 32%. Fewer MPs than last year completed the survey.
- Respondents did not particularly find our old website useful. Less than 50% of respondents across all three categories found the website *Very useful* or *Useful*. Our new website has now been launched, and although many respondents have not yet used the new website, we hope that in future surveys the results will show it is much more useful than our previous web presence.
- Many respondents were unhappy with the quality of email contact and advice in notes sent to them by IPSA with returned claims. 25% said that our written responses in notes were unclear, unhelpful, or written in poor English; and 14% complained about inconsistency in the advice they received.
- Respondents are unhappy with IPSA's systems and processes overall. 50% of MPs said they find the online expenses system either *Very difficult* or *Fairly difficult* to use, and 26% of proxies said the same. Both respondent groups responded more negatively here than last year.
- There was a marked fall in the number of MPs who were happy with our budget tool: 50%, down from 64% last year. Just 27% were happy with the staff contract tool, down from 48% last year. These aspects of IPSA will be addressed as part of the IPSA 2017 programme.
- MPs responded poorly to questions about IPSA's regulatory responsibilities and there was a noticeable decline in the results compared to last year: only 20% rated IPSA positively as regards regulation, down from 32% last year. 60% rated IPSA's regulatory performance negatively.

IPSA'S Response

We are very grateful for all of the responses to the survey. There are some clear signs that MPs, their proxies, and their staff think that there have been many improvements in the support and services that we offer, but, of course, there remains more for us to do, and we are aware of some of the ways in which we can improve.

In response to feedback and requests from MPs and staff from previous surveys and other feedback gathering methods, we have begun implemented measures to improve the support that we offer MPs and their offices.

In addition to completed initiatives, there are other areas identified in the survey that MPs and their staff wanted us to think about. We have completed or are currently carrying out projects to work on these as part of our IPSA 2017 improvement programme.

The IPSA 2017 improvement programme has five elements and we consider each to be essential in improving IPSA's regulatory and operational responsibilities. We have already achieved three of the five:

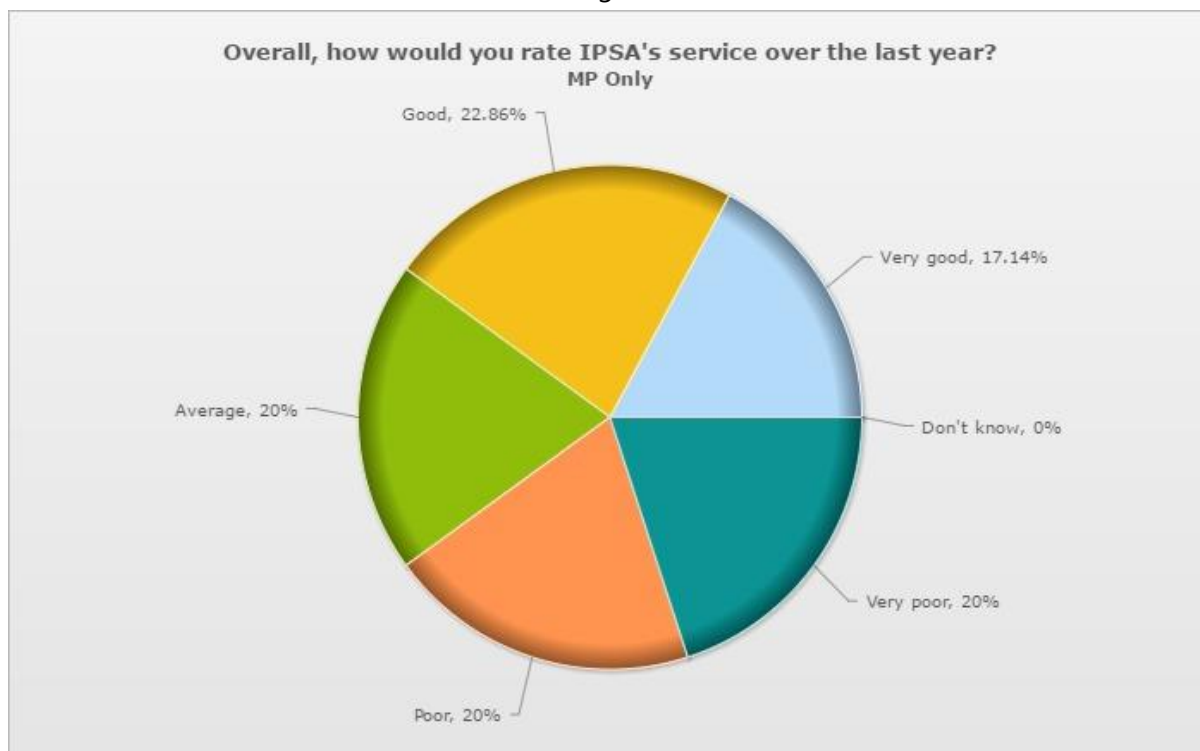
- In April 2016, we implemented an account management approach to our support of MPs.
- In November 2016, we launched a new public-facing website.
- In March 2017, following a long consultation and detailed deliberation, we published a new set of rules in our Scheme of MPs' Business Costs.

The remaining two elements of the programme are:

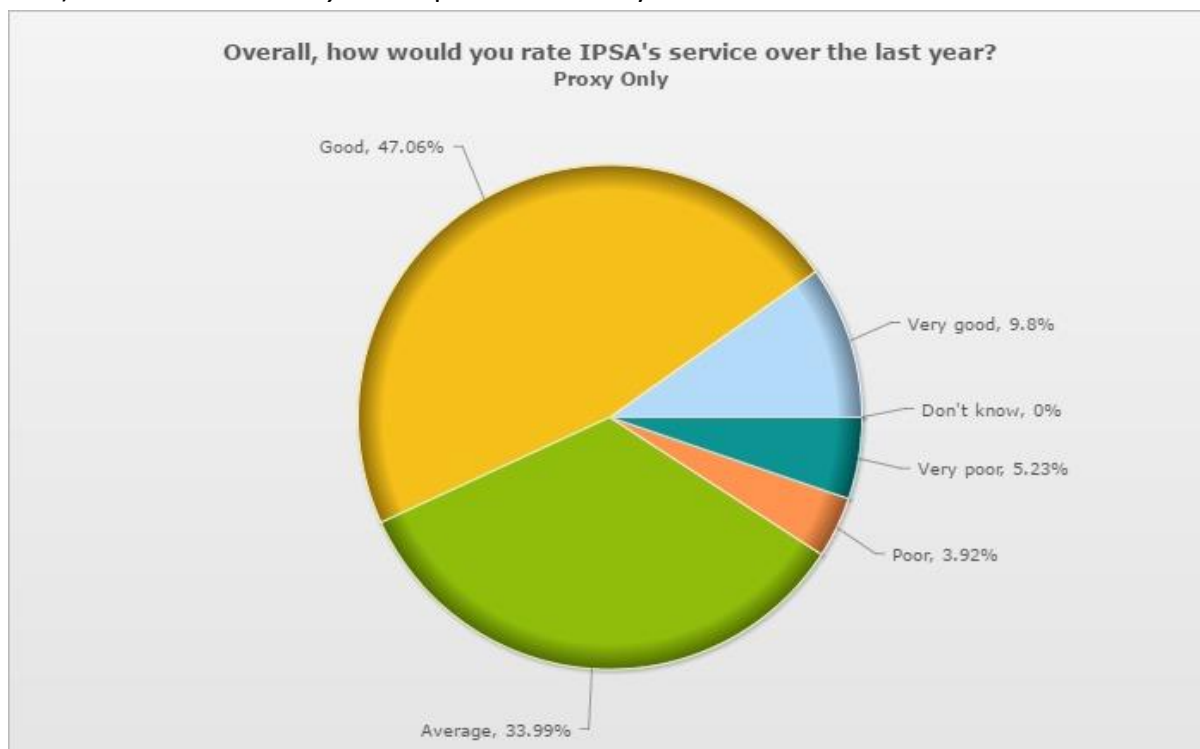
- To launch a new 'MP Portal' by December 2017. This will be an online interface through which MPs can access information about their budgets, claims and other financial business with us. The new Portal will make submitting claims easier for MPs, as well as providing more accurate and up to date information on their budgets and spending.
- To implement a new 'ERP' system that will bring together our finance, payroll, HR and expenses system into a single IT system. This will provide efficiencies in the way we support the work of MPs, as well as improved data quality and a more unified experience for MPs. We are aiming for a April 2018 launch.

An Overall Rating

We asked MPs, their proxies, and their other staff to rate IPSA's service over the past year overall. Among MPs who responded to the question, the results were markedly polarised as they were in 2015. 40% (14 MPs) of those surveyed rated IPSA's service as *Very Good* or *Good*, lower than last year's figure of 46%. The same figure of 40% (14 MPs) rated it *Poor* or *Very Poor* compared to a smaller 32% last year. 20% (7 MPs) rated the service *Average* compared to 18% last year.

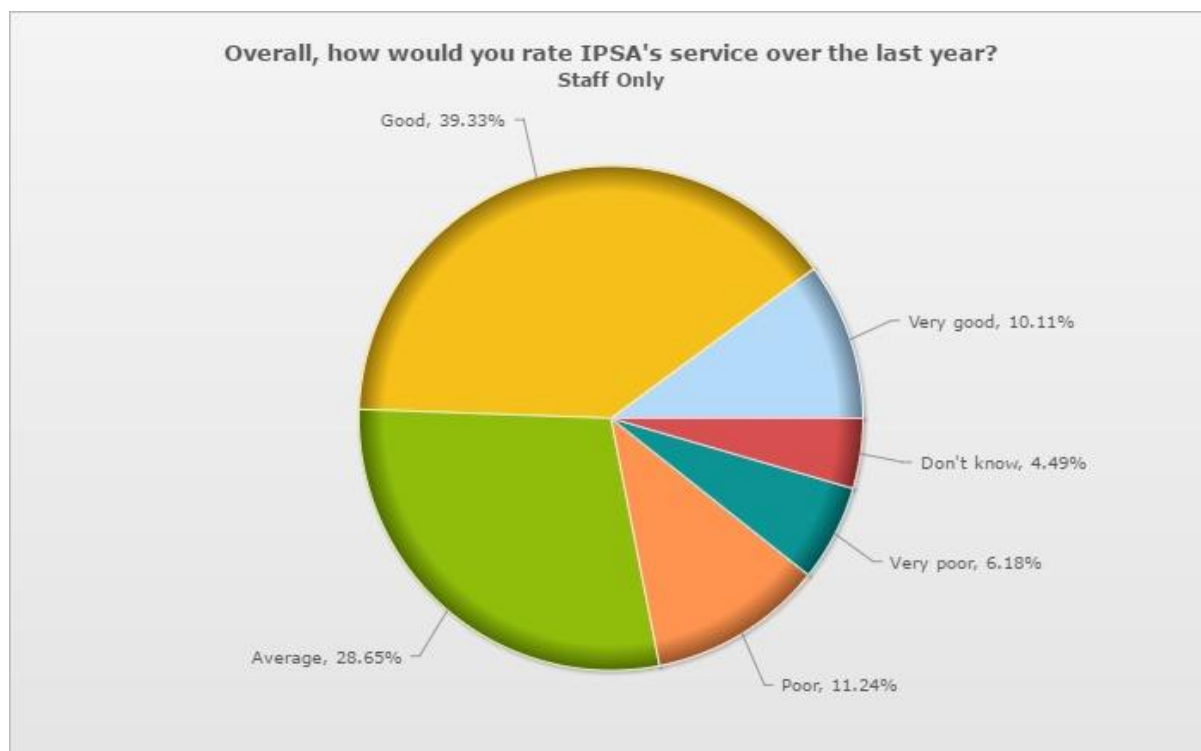


Among MPs' proxies who were asked the same question, the results were decidedly better. 57% (20 MPs) of those surveyed rated IPSA's service as *Very Good* or *Good* compared to 53% last year. 34% (12 MPs) rated the service *Average* down from 38% last year. 14% (5 MPs) rated it *Poor* or *Very Poor* up from 9 % last year.



MPs' staff were asked the same question. 49% of those surveyed rated IPSA's service as *Very Good* or *Good*, an increase on last year's figure of 45%. 27% rated the service *Average*,

the same as last year. 17% rated it *Poor* or *Very Poor* compared to last year's figure of 18%. 4% of respondents selected *Don't Know*.

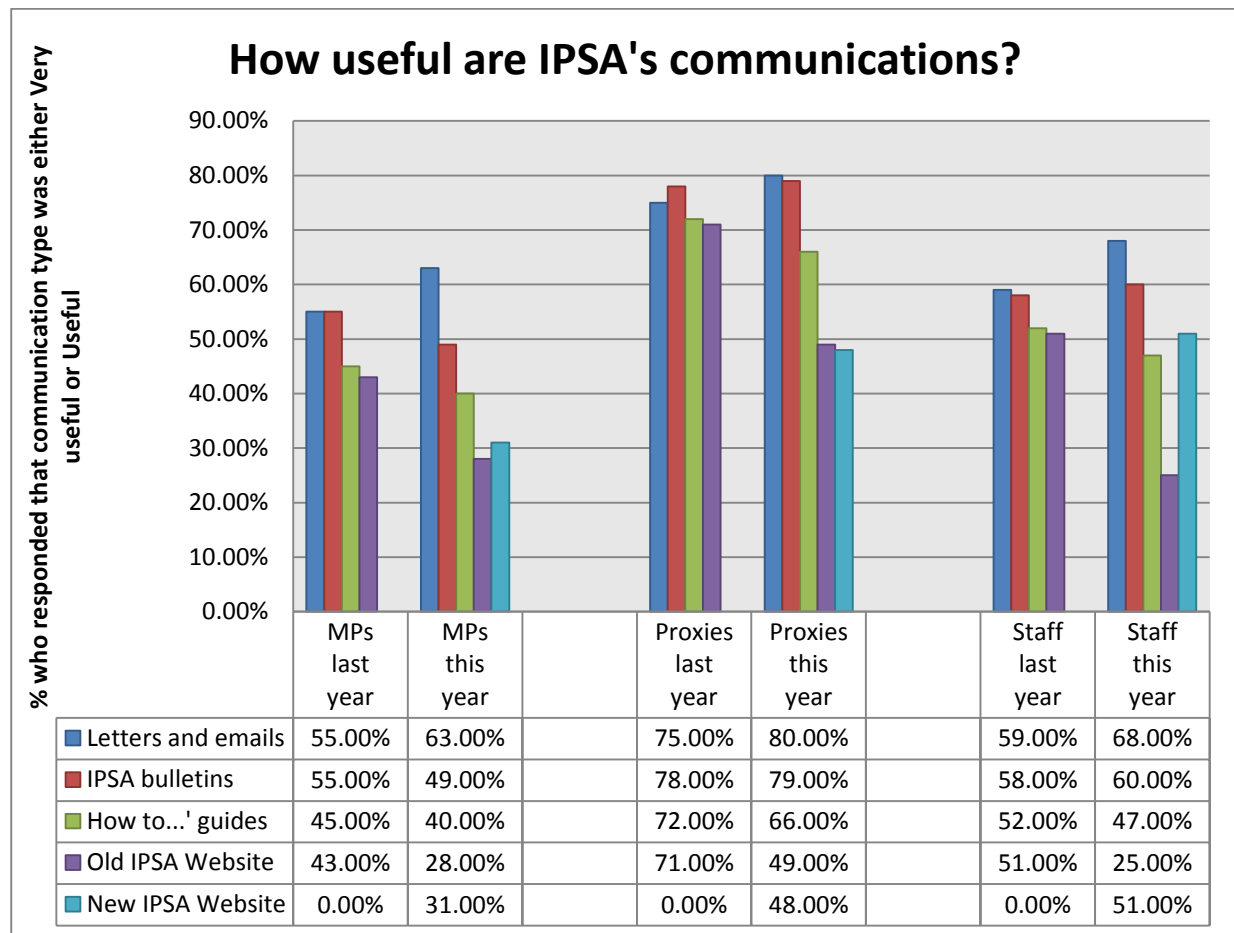


The year overall - Advice and guidance from IPSA

The feedback from MPs, their proxies, and their staff on IPSA's communications has been mixed. With regard to MPs this year, bulletins, 'How to...' guides and the old IPSA website are all perceived to be less useful than last year. However, MPs responded more positively this year to the usefulness of letters and emails from IPSA.

Proxies rated very highly the usefulness of letters and emails, bulletins, and 'How to...' guides, though there was a significant drop in the perceived usefulness of the old IPSA website.


Information in on IPSA's old website and in 'How to...' guides were all rated as less useful by staff this year compared to last, though letter and emails and bulletins were considered to be generally more useful this year compared to last. Staff were the only group of respondents where a majority considered the new IPSA website to be useful.



Usefulness of information from IPSA (IPSA-initiated contact) – some comparisons

Letters and emails

- 63% of MPs (22 MPs) rated information that we provide through letters and emails as either *Very useful* or *Useful*, up from 55% last year. Dissatisfaction remained the same for MPs: 23% (8 MPs) rated information that we provide through letters and emails as either *Not very useful* or *Not at all Useful*.
- 80% of proxies surveyed rated IPSA's letters and emails as being either *Very useful* or *Useful*; higher than both MPs and staff and up from 75% last year. Just 6% of proxies described our letters and emails as either *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all*, a significantly lower proportion than the result from both MPs and ordinary staff and down from 8% last year.
- 68% of staff described the information in letters and emails as *Very useful* or *Useful*, up from 59% last year. 10% said they were either *Not very useful* or *Not at all useful*, down from 15% last year.



Having individual email addresses for IPSA staff, or at least being able to direct an enquiry to a specific department, rather than just one generic IPSA email address.

Bulletins

IPSA regularly emails bulletins to all MPs, their proxies, and their staff.

An MP's staff member



- When asked to rate the usefulness of these bulletins, 49% of MPs (17 MPs) described them as either *Very useful* or *Useful*, down from 55% last year. Dissatisfaction rose compared to last year, with 29% of MPs (10 MPs) saying they were *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all* compared to 19% last year.
- Proxies were the most positive group, with 79% describing bulletins as either *Very useful* or *Useful*, up from 78% last year. 5% of proxies described IPSA's bulletins as either *Not very useful* or *Not at all useful* down from 9% last year.
- Staff were more positive than MPs: 60% described the bulletins as either *Very useful* or *Useful*, up from 58% last year. 16% of staff said they were either *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all*, up from 13% last year.

IPSA's 'How to' guides

We publish 'How to' guides on IPSA's website for use by MPs, their proxies, and their staff to support them in their work with IPSA's systems and processes. These include guides on making claims online and advice on managing cash flow in an MP's office.

- MPs were slightly less positive this year in their assessment of the usefulness of information provided in 'How to' guides. 40% of MPs (14 MPs) said that they were either *Very useful* or *Useful* compared to 45% last year. 29% (10 MPs) said they were either *Not very useful* or *Not at all useful*, a large rise from 11% last year.
- Again, proxies' responses were the most positive. 66% of proxies described the information in 'How to' guides as either *Very useful* or *Useful*, but this was down from 72% last year. 7% said they were either *Not very useful* or *Not at all useful*, similar to last year at 8%.
- Staff members were less positive this year with 47% saying that the information in 'How to' guides was either *Very useful* or *Useful* compared to 52% last year. 12% said they were either *Not very useful* or *Not at all useful*, similar to the 11% who said the same last year.

Old IPSA website

- MPs were less positive about information on IPSA's old website than they were last year. 28% of MPs (9 MPs) described it as either *Very useful* or *Useful*, down from 43% last year. 49% (17 MPs) described information on the old website as either *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all*; up from 18% last year.
- Proxies were more positive, with 49% of proxies surveyed describing information on the website as either *Very useful* or *Useful*, though this was down from 71% last year. 20% of proxies described it as either *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all*, up from 7% last year.
- 25% said that the website's information was either *Very useful* or *Useful*, down from 51% last year. Dissatisfaction rose: 18% of staff this year described the website's information as either *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all* compared to 15% last year.

New IPSA website

As the new website was launched since the conduct of the last survey, there are no results from last year for comparison. 30% of all respondents responded with "Don't know" when asked to provide feedback here, possibly indicating that they have not used the new website.

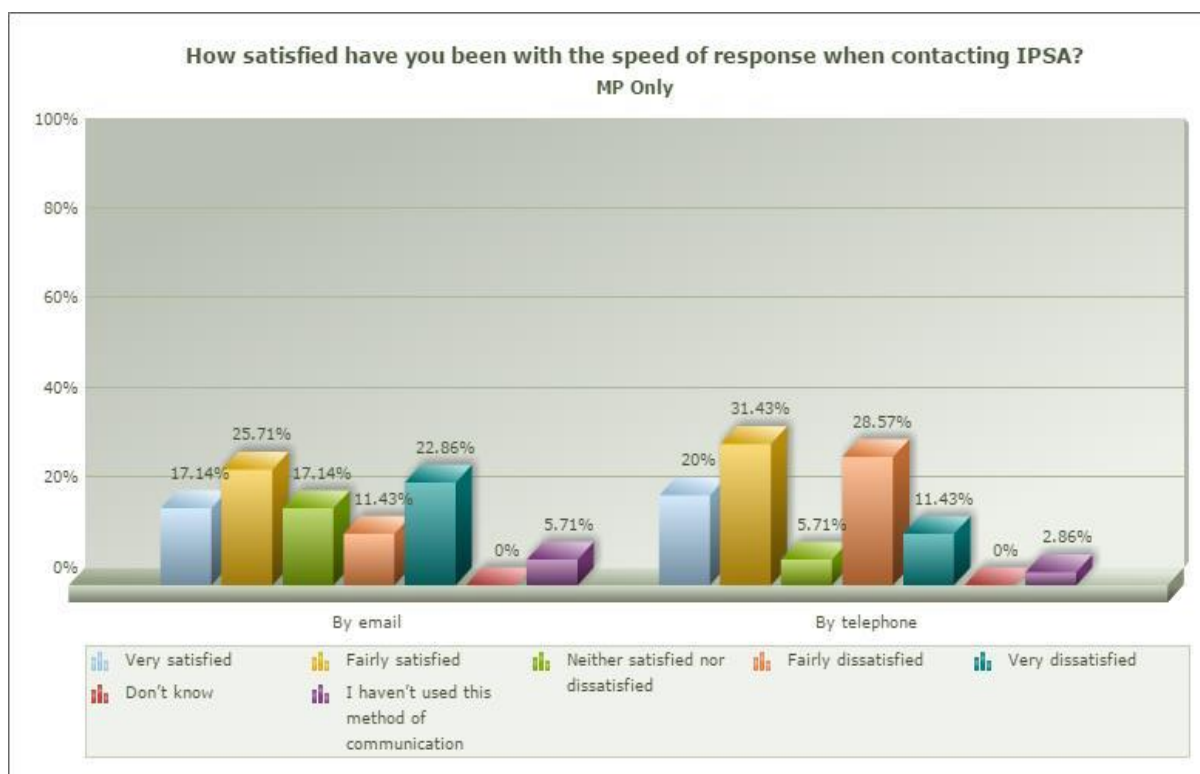
- 31% of MPs (11 MPs) described the information on the new website as either *Very useful* or *Useful*. 32% (11 MPs) of them described information on the website as either *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all*.

- 48% of proxies surveyed describing information on the new website as either *Very useful* or *Useful*. 8% of proxies described it as either *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all*.
- 51% said that the new website's information was either *Very useful* or *Useful*. 11% of staff described the new website's information as either *Not very useful* or *Not useful at all*.

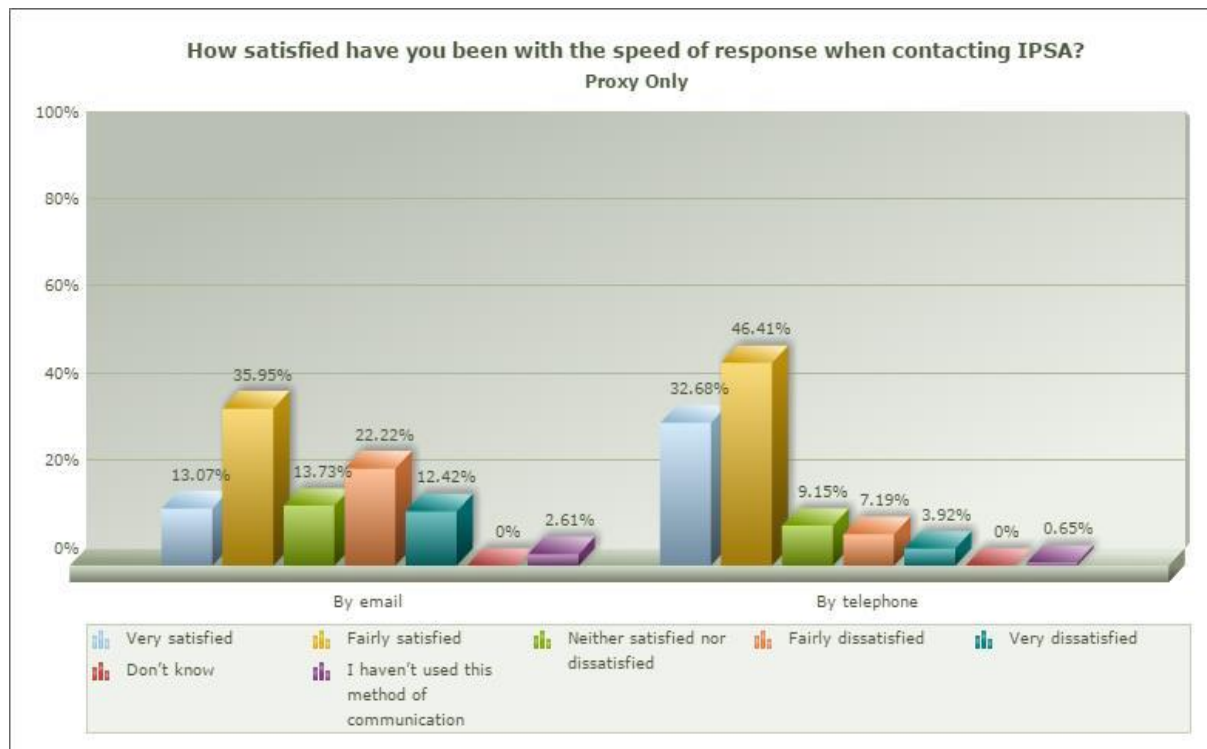
Speed of IPSA's response

Respondents were asked how satisfied they are with the speed of response from IPSA when they contacted us. Last year we asked respondents to rate the speed of our replies overall, rather than referring separately to responses by emails and telephone. This year we have separated these two methods of communication for a more thorough analysis.

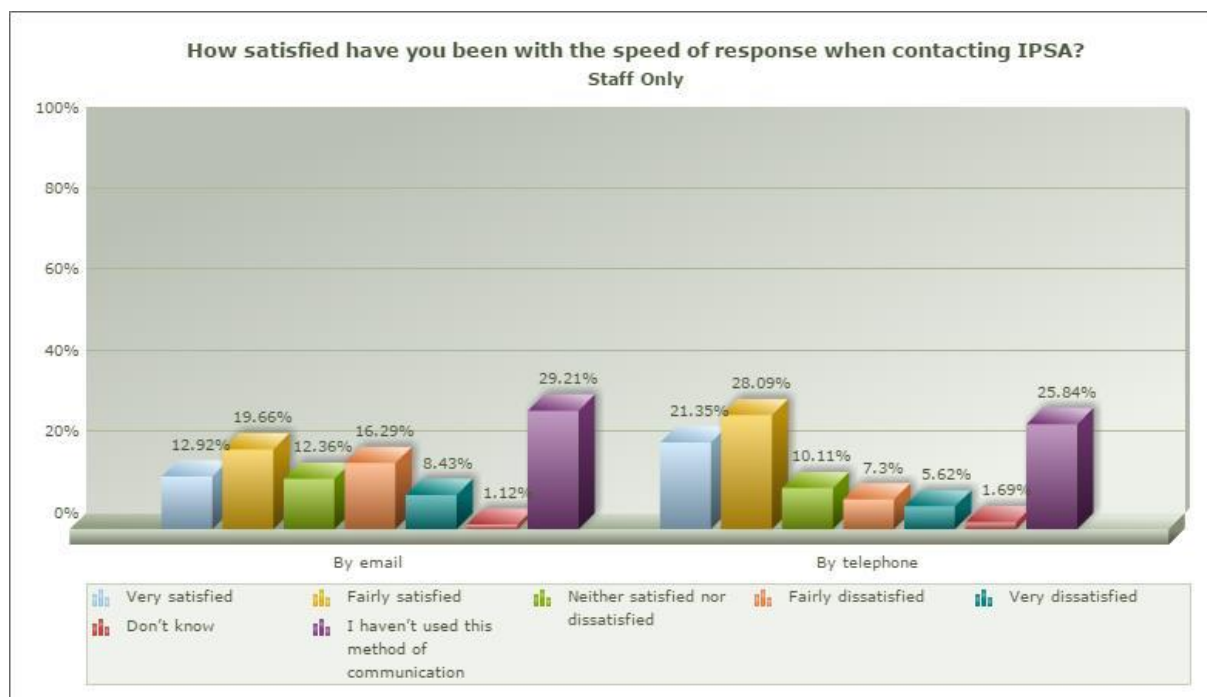
Responses by email, and telephone



- MPs were divided. 43% of MPs questioned (15 MPs) said that they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the speed of IPSA's responses via email, with 34% (12 MPs) saying that they were either *Fairly dissatisfied* or *Very dissatisfied*. 51% (18 MPs) were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the speed of IPSA's responses via telephone, with 40% (14 MPs) saying that they were either *Fairly dissatisfied* or *Very dissatisfied*.



- Proxies' responses were slightly more positive. 49% were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the speed of response by email, with 35% either *Fairly dissatisfied* or *Very dissatisfied*. 79% were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the speed of response by telephone, with just 11% either *Fairly dissatisfied* or *Very dissatisfied*.



- Amongst MPs' staff, 33% said that they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the speed of response by email, with 25% saying that they were either *Fairly dissatisfied* or *Very dissatisfied*. 49% said that they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the speed of response by telephone, with 13% saying that they were either *Fairly dissatisfied* or *Very dissatisfied*. Staff were the respondent group with the greatest amount of responses indicating that they had never been in touch with IPSA via email or telephone: 29% and 26% respectively.

Helpfulness of contact with IPSA when contact initiated by an MP or MP's office

We know that advice on the Scheme of Business Costs and Expenses is a very important aspect of the support that we provide to MPs and staff.

Email

- When asked how helpful their contact with IPSA was, when they initiated contact by email, 49% of MPs (17 MPs) said it was either *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*, down from 52% last year. 31% (11 MPs) said it was either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*, up from 23% last year.
- Proxies' responses were very positive: 68% of proxies said email advice was either *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*, up from 62% last year. 16% described them as either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*, down from 23% last year.
- Amongst staff, 45% said advice in emails was either *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*, up from 35% last year. 17% said it was either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*, down from 22% last year.

Telephone

- MPs described the advice they received over the phone as less helpful than last year: 49% (17 MPs) said it was *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*, compared to 48% last year. 34% of MPs (12 MPs) said the advice was either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*, up from 30% last year.
- Proxies' responses were once again positive. 84% of proxies described their contact over the phone with IPSA as either *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*, an improvement on 80% last year. Only 12% of proxy responses said that advice over the telephone was either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*, a slight increase on 10% last year.

- 53% of MPs' staff described their contact with IPSA over the phone as either *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*, up from 48% last year. 13% said it was either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*, down from 17% last year.

Face-to-face meeting with IPSA

46% of MPs, 68% of proxies, and 76% of staff who responded told us that they have not had a face-to-face meeting with a member of staff at IPSA in the last year.

- 26% of MPs (9 MPs) said that it was either *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*. 9% (3 MPs) said it was either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*.
- 28% of proxies said it was either *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*. Only 2% said it was either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*.
- 12% of the staff described face-to-face meetings as either *Very helpful* or *Fairly helpful*. 4% said that they were either *Not very helpful* or *Not at all helpful*.

More engagement with MPs face-to-face to ask for problems encountered with external communication.

An MP

How can IPSA improve its guidance?

IPSA asked MPs, their proxies, and their staff how we could improve the information and guidance that we offer them. Answers were given in a free text field. Of the 134 responses to this question, the answers broadly fell into the following categories:

| Suggestion | Percentage of responses* |
|---|--------------------------|
| Give more accurate, consistent, concise, and clearer information | 30% |
| Respond to emails more quickly/improve quality of responses | 14% |
| Non-specific grievance/request for improvement | 7% |
| Improvements to website, e.g.: easier navigation and clearer structure to find forms | 6% |
| Staff at IPSA require more training | 6% |
| Extend the Information Line opening hours | 4% |
| Request for more face-to-face contact e.g.: presence within the Parliamentary Estate, constituency presence | 4% |
| IPSA staff should improve their understanding of how MPs work | 3% |

| | |
|--|----|
| Praise for current work done by IPSA | 3% |
| Improvements to online expenses system by, e.g.: more detailed information on claim forms, easier to generate reports and forecasts. | 3% |
| Request for more flexibility in relation to rules or a request for rules to be more clear. | 3% |
| Being able to email account managers directly | 3% |
| Confirmation of telephone conversations with IPSA via email | 2% |
| Provide better training and inductions to MPs' staff on IPSA systems | 2% |
| Give each MP a named contact** | 1% |
| Better HR advice for MPs staff | 1% |
| Better guidance on hiring staff | 1% |
| IPSA should own up to mistakes | 1% |
| Give more proxy-style access to staff members | 1% |
| More direct payment options and better advice on direct payments | 1% |
| "Don't know" or N/A | 7% |

*n.b. some responses contained a number of suggestions, as such that the percentages in the right hand column add up to more than 100%.

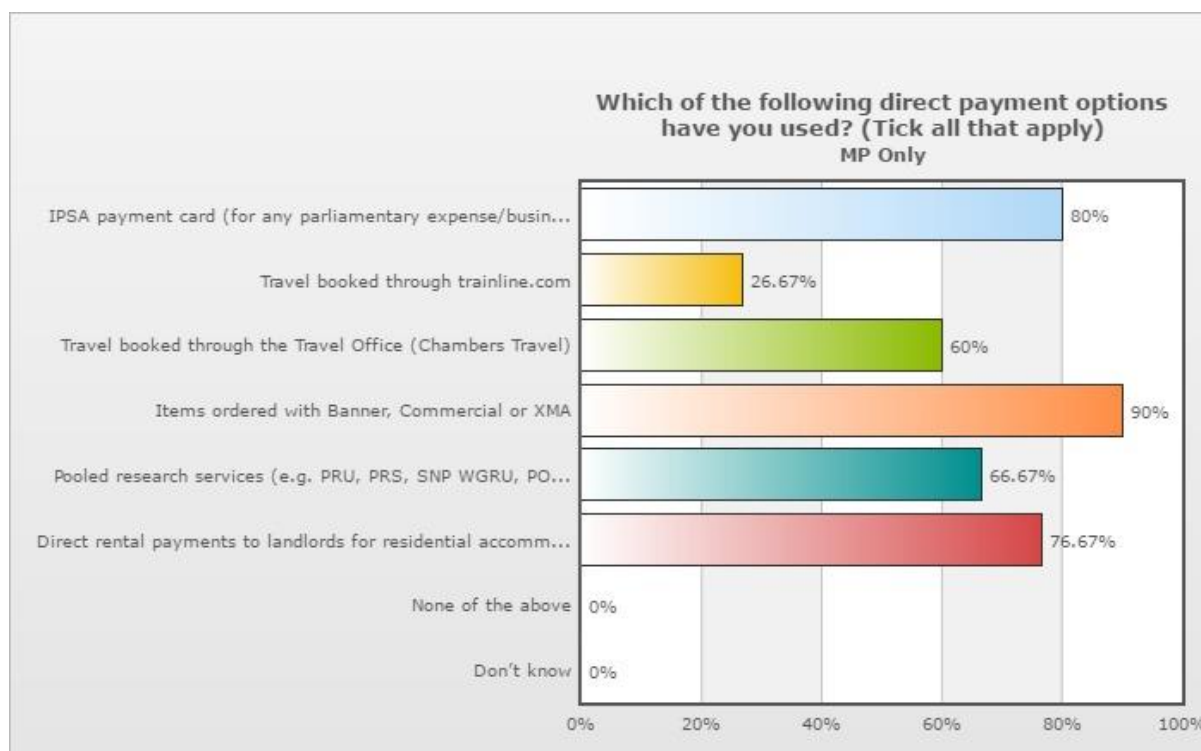
**We began trialling a model of account management in 2016 and this is now a permanent arrangement. All MPs' offices have a named contact at IPSA. We will continue to publicise this to MPs and to their staff to ensure they are aware of this.

IPSA doesn't tend to give firm answers to specific questions. [It feels as though] sometimes IPSA is covering themselves just in case, whereas before it was much easier to get a straight "yes" or "no" answer. Maybe IPSA could improve on this?

An MP's proxy

Payment card and direct payments

MPs are provided with a credit card, the IPSA Payment Card, to pay for many any otherwise claimable expense or allowable costs directly. They can also, for example, buy train tickets and stationery through specific websites where IPSA pays the bill directly. This removes the need for MPs to incur a personal cost whilst maintaining the system of claims being paid on the basis of evidence. In our survey, we asked MPs and their proxies¹ which direct payment options they used. The payment card and direct payment options for MPs business costs are widely used; 0% of MPs said they did not use any options for direct payment, down from 5% last year. Only 1% of proxies have never used direct payment options.



- 80% of MPs (24 MPs) and 92% of their proxies have used the IPSA Payment Card to pay for an allowable expense or business cost, down from 86% and up from 89% respectively last year.
- 27% of MPs (8 MPs) booked train tickets directly on the Trainline website, down from 32% last year. 38% of proxies have done the same, up from 31% last year.
- 60% of MPs (18 MPs) used direct payments for travel booked through the Parliamentary travel office, up from 59% last year. 61% of proxies did the same, up from 51% last year.

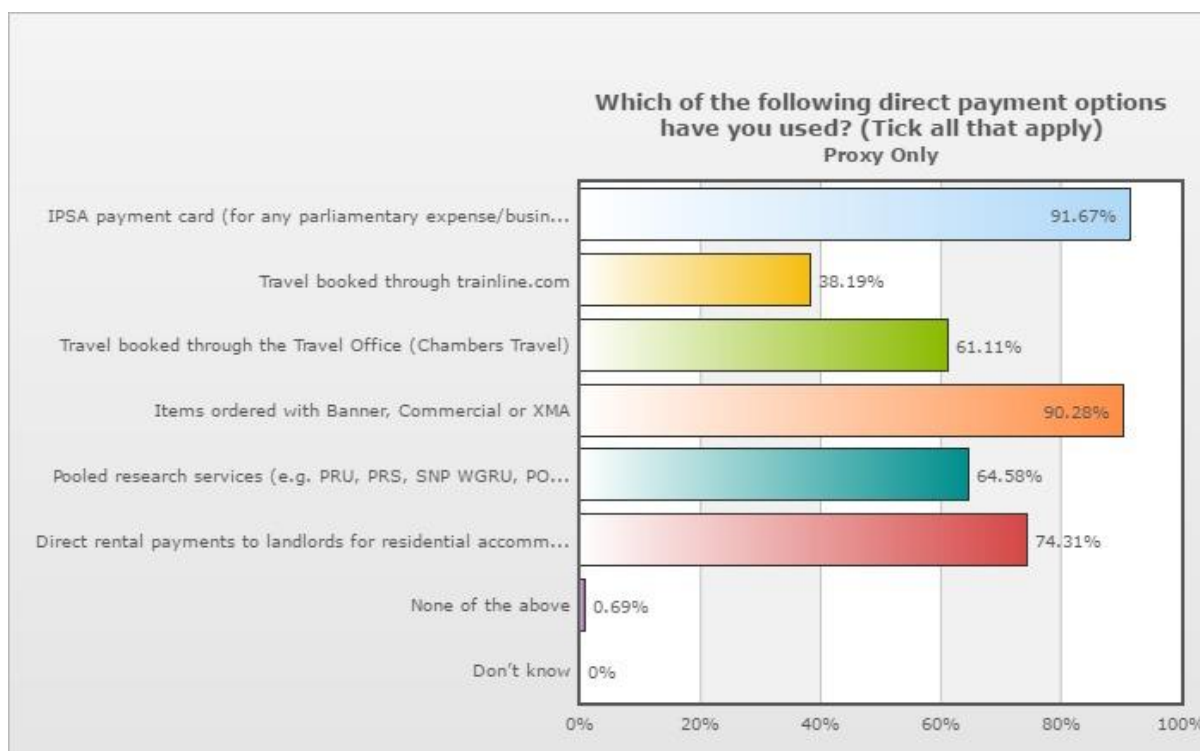
¹ We only asked MPs and their proxies, as the majority of MPs' staff do not have access to direct payment facilities.

- 90% of MPs (27 MPs) bought stationery directly from Banner, Commercial or XMA, up from 77% last year. The proportion of proxies who did the same was also 90%, up from 89% last year.
- 67% of MPs (20 MPs) paid directly for pooled research services, e.g. the PRU or PRS, up from 52% last year. The proportion for MPs' proxies was 65% up from 57% last year.
- 77% of MPs (23 MPs) made direct payments to landlords for accommodation or office rent, up from 64% last year. 74% of proxies have done the same on behalf of MPs, down from 78% last year.

...the majority of our one-off expenses involve having to send off invoices because small companies don't take credit cards. We would like to be able to make all payments via direct payment... The Scottish Parliament allows this system and it works well.

An increasing number of MPs are using the direct payment options available to them. Using the payment card and other direct payment services, MPs are able to pay directly for all business costs incurred as part of their parliamentary duties (with the exception of mileage claims).

An MP's proxy




IPSA asked MPs and their staff how we could help them to make the most of the payment card and direct payments. Of the 66 responses to this question, the answers broadly fell within the following categories:

| Suggestion | Percentage of all responses* |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Provide a Direct Debit or BACS facility to pay suppliers (e.g. utility companies). | 35% |
| Open up the direct payment/payment card facilities to more suppliers and business costs | 33% |
| Resolve issues with/ make improvements to existing direct payment facilities | 9% |
| Provide additional IPSA payment cards for use by proxies/staff | 6% |
| Provide training and guidance to staff and/or MPs on direct payments | 6% |
| Increase the maximum spend on the card | 3% |
| Provide a full list of costs and expenses that can be paid using the payment card/direct payment | 2% |
| Make the card contactless | 2% |
| Other (e.g. expression of non-specific grievance, no comments for improvement, specific personal complaint). | 2% |
| "Dont know" or N/A | 14% |

**n.b.* some responses contained a number of suggestions, as such that the percentages in the right hand column add up to more than 100%

Specific services that MPs and staff would like to be able to use/pay for using the payment card or direct payment facilities included:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cellhire/mobile phones • Surgery costs • A BACS payment facility • Contactless payments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax (some mentioned that their local Council does not accept credit cards) • Printing services • Security services |
|--|--|

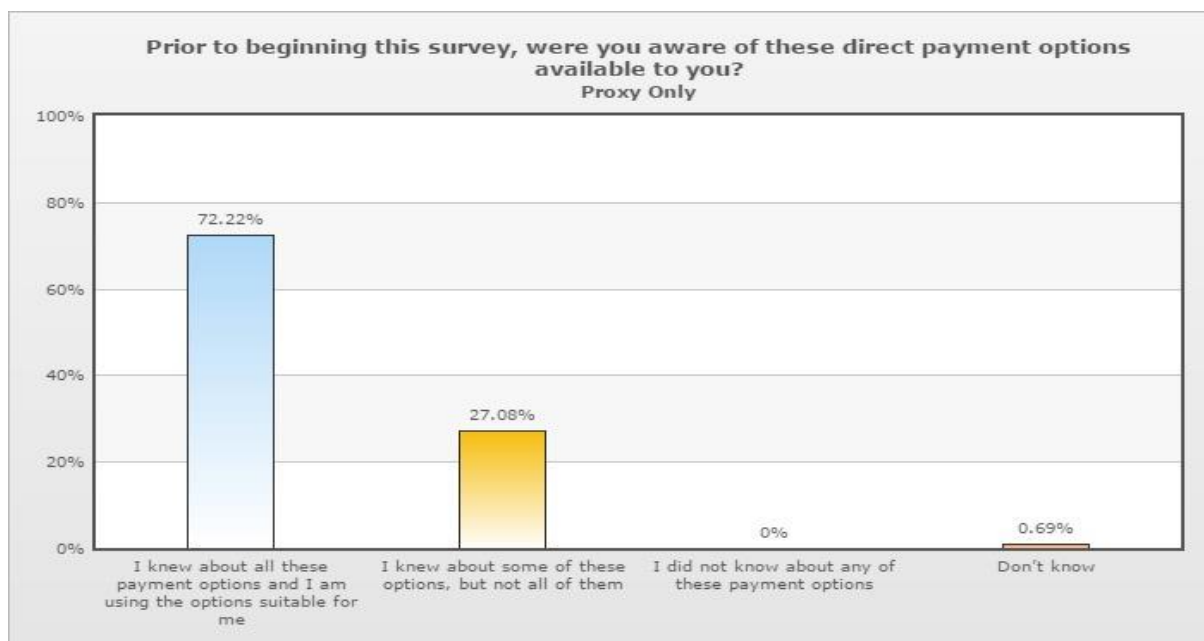
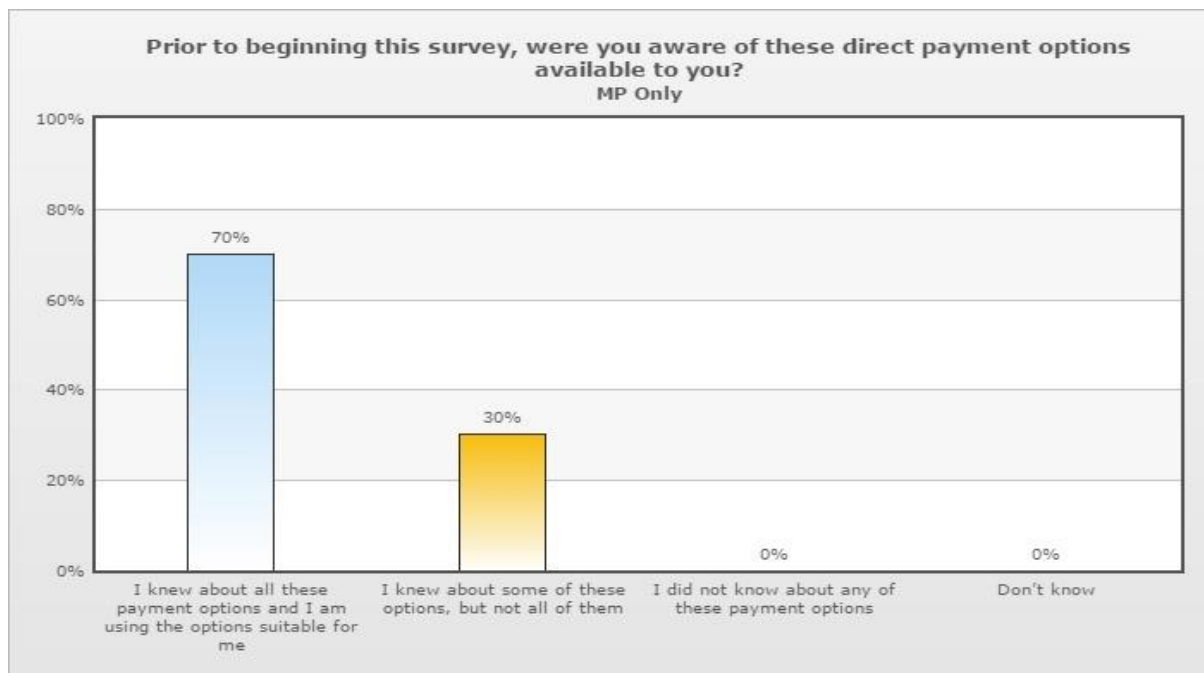


We were told that a claim had been paid when it had not - we had to chase to and investigate on several occasions before payment was received this was for a large amount of money...

An MP's proxy



We also asked MPs and proxies how aware they were of the direct payment options. Proxies were slightly more knowledgeable than MPs, though the responses from both groups indicate there is a good all-round knowledge of the direct payment facilities available.



Completing claims

Hours per month spent making claims for costs and expenses

We asked MPs and their proxies how many hours on average they spend per month making claims on the online system for business costs and expenses. The results were as follows:

| Average length of time per month spent making claims. | Percentage of respondents last year | Percentage of respondents this year |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Between 0 and 2 hours | 10% | 9% |
| Between 2 and 4 hours | 16% | 20% |
| Between 4 and 6 hours | 13% | 20% |
| Between 6 and 8 hours | 8% | 17% |
| Between 8 and 10 hours | 7% | 14% |
| 10+ hours | 24% | 19% |
| N/A | 21% | 2% |

How this compares to last year

We asked MPs and their proxies how they felt the amount of time they had spent making claims this year compared to last year.

MPs' responses were largely neutral. 10% of MPs (3 MPs) said they spent *Somewhat less time now* making claims compared to last year (no MPs selected the option *Much less time now*.) 67% of MPs (20 MPs) said they spent *About the same amount of time* this year compared to last, a clear majority. 13% of MPs (4 MPs) said that they spend *Somewhat more time now* or *Much more time now* compared to last year.

Proxies' responses were somewhat more varied. 25% of proxies said that they spent either *Much less time now* or *Somewhat less time now* making claims compared to last year. 55% of proxies stated that they spent *About the same amount of time* this year compared to last, lower than the figure for MPs though still a clear majority. Just 2% said that they spent *Somewhat more time now* or *Much more time now* compared to last year.

Time recorded on Expense@Work

We can also compare MP, proxy, and staff responses regarding the amount of time they spent making claims with the times that we have recorded.

The average MP or proxy spent 23 minutes 47 seconds per week on the expenses system in the last financial year (2015-16), compared to 24 minutes 7 seconds per week in the previous year. So far this financial year (2016-17), that amount of time has changed: the average MP or proxy spent 23 minutes 20 seconds per week on the system.

Time spent on the Expenses@Work system is not the only time that MPs or their staff will spend making claims for business costs and expenses. They will spend time collating and

sending in their receipts to IPSA, reconciling their payment card and checking expenses against the Scheme, amongst other things.

The online expenses system: ease of use

We asked MPs and their proxies how easy they find the online expenses system to use.

20% of MPs who answered this question (6 MPs) said they found the system either *Very easy* or *Fairly easy* to use, up from 19% last year. 50% (15 MPs) told us that they found the system either *Fairly difficult* or *Very difficult* to use, up from 46% in the previous year.

MPs' proxies were more positive: more than half, 56%, of them said they find the system either *Very easy* or *Fairly easy* to use, up from 55% last year. 26% find it either *Fairly difficult* or *Very difficult*, up from 25% last year.

The online expenses system: usefulness of reports

We asked MPs and their proxies to tell us how useful they find being able to produce reports on the online system detailing how much they have spent on various budgets.

A majority of MPs who responded to this question, 50% (15 MPs), agreed that *Yes, this is useful*, though this was down from 61% last year. Only 23% (7 MPs) thought that the reporting functions of the online system were not useful, up from 9% last year. 16% (5 MPs) said that they had never used the facility.

An even larger majority of proxies, 70%, agreed that *Yes, this is useful* as regards online reports, though this also was down from 75% last year. 10% disagreed and stated it was not useful, an improvement on 12% last year. 15% told us that they had never used the report function.

Explanatory notes when returning claims

When there are errors in claims submitted to IPSA or when further information is required in order to validate a claim, IPSA's validators write an explanatory note to get the information they need or explain a decision. This note is then sent to the MP or their proxy.

We asked MPs and proxies about these returned claims and explanatory notes. 88% of respondents had had at least one claim returned to them with an explanatory note, up from 79% last year. Feedback on how clear explanatory notes are was divided, with 37% of MPs telling us they were clear, down from 43% last year, and 43% saying that they were not clear, up from 36% last year. Proxies were more positive: 61% said the notes were clear, similar to the 63% last year, and 26% said they were unclear, the same result as last year.

We asked MPs and their staff if they had any comments to make about the explanatory notes IPSA sent them when returning a claim. Of the 64 responses we received, these were the most common answers:

| Response | Percentage of all responses* |
|---|------------------------------|
| Notes are generally unclear/unhelpful/written in poor English and/or require further clarification and instructions from IPSA | 25% |
| There is a lack of consistency and uniformity in IPSA's notes; MP or proxy has had contradictory advice through explanatory notes, or some claims accepted then identical claims rejected | 14% |
| Notes do not explain adequately which types of expense should be used or what information is required when resubmitting a claim. | 13% |
| Information sent in notes should also be sent as an email to the MP/proxy or conveyed by telephone. | 11% |
| IPSA sends notes which have not taken into account the MP's/proxy's own notes or circumstances. | 5% |
| IPSA takes too long to send notes requesting further information from the MP | 5% |
| No specific suggestion for improvement or N/A | 14% |

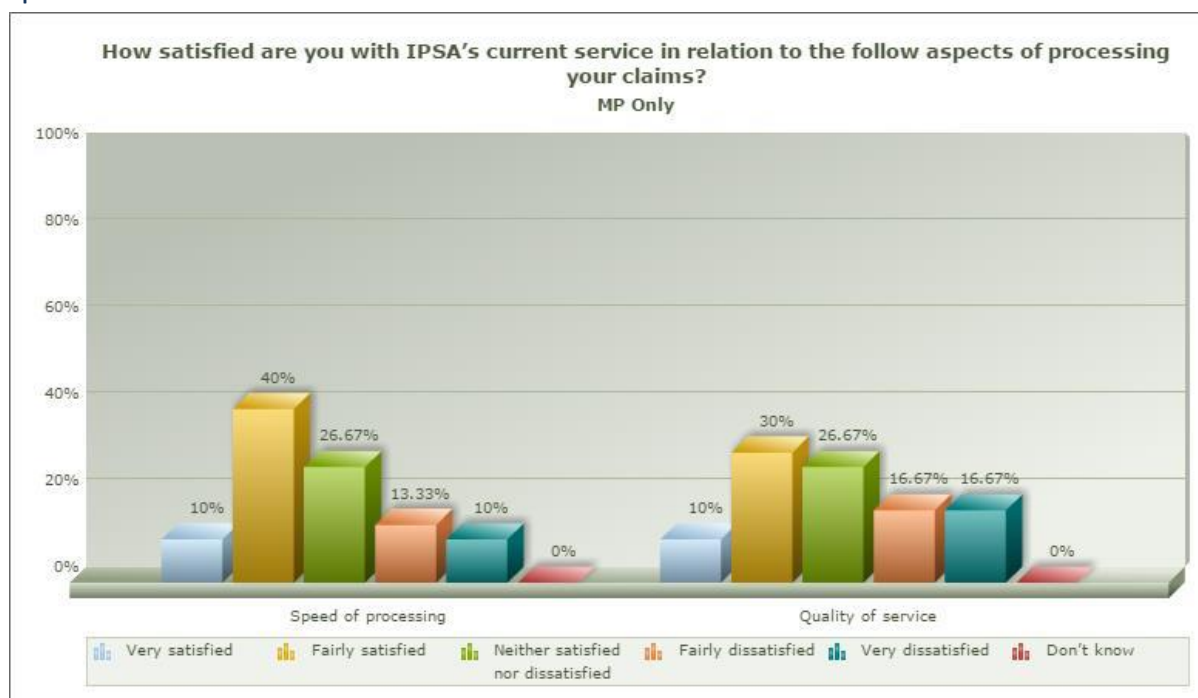
*n.b. some responses contained multiple suggestions falling into more than one category.

As such the percentages in the rightmost column add to more than 100%

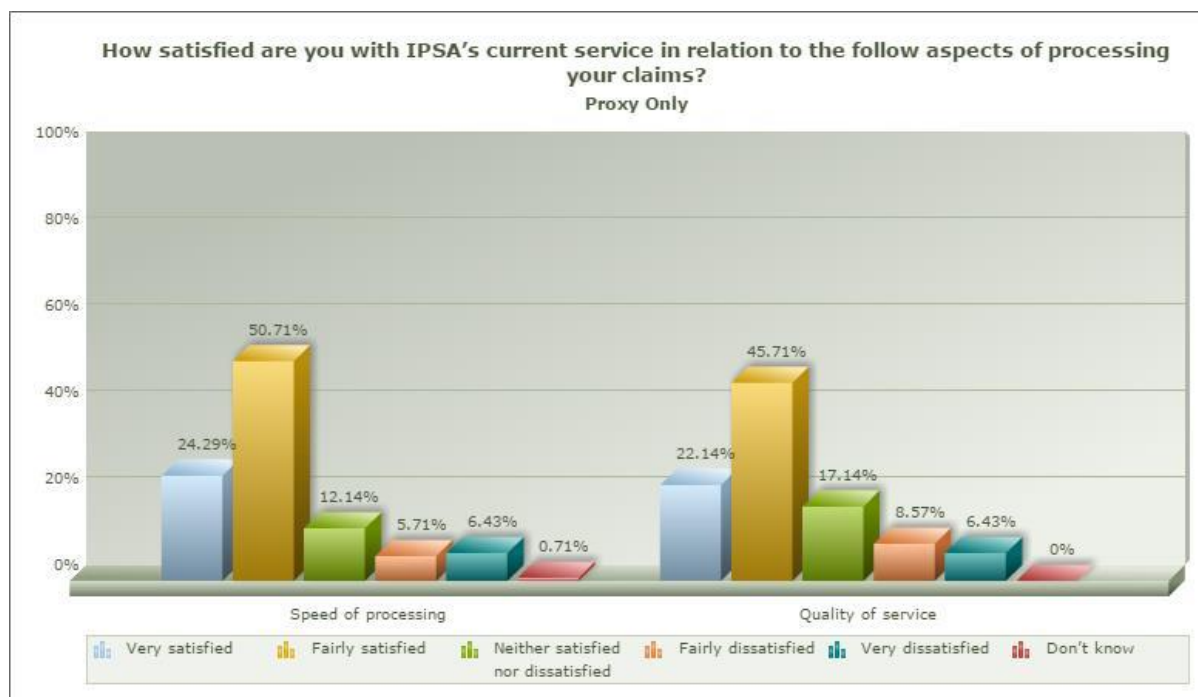
Processing claims by IPSA

We asked MPs and their staff about how IPSA processes claims for business costs and expenses. We asked respondents to tell us how satisfied they were with the speed and quality of the processing of claims.

Speed



50% of MPs who responded (15 MPs) were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the speed, up from 47% last year. 23% of MPs (7 MPs) said they were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*, the same proportion as last year.



75% of proxies were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the speed, up from 68% last year, whilst 12% were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*, down from 16% last year.

According to statistics held by IPSA, the average claim took 4 days from receipt of evidence for a claim to reimbursement in the last financial year (2015-16), compared with the average of 7 days in the previous year (2014-15).

Quality

As regards the quality of processing their business costs and expenses claims, 40% of MPs (12 MPs) who responded to this question said they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied*, slightly down from 43% last year. 33% of MPs (10 MPs) were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*, a small rise from 32% last year.

Proxies' responses were once again more favourable. 68% said they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the quality of service, the same result as last year. 15% saying they were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*, a decrease from 17% last year.

We asked MPs and their proxies to explain why they selected their respective ratings of the speed and quality

I don't understand why regular bills in particular take so long to pay and I have noticed that, the bigger the bill, the longer IPSA takes.

MP's staff member

of IPSA's processing claims. Of the 105 responses to this question, the answers broadly fell into the following categories:

| Response | Percentage of all responses* |
|---|------------------------------|
| Payments take too long and/or their speed of processing varies between different types of expense | 32% |
| Good performance by IPSA (e.g. fast turnaround, helpful staff, general positive responses) | 21% |
| Recent improvements in IPSA's performance | 13% |
| Loss of documents by IPSA or poor communication | 10% |
| Inconsistency: in decisions made by IPSA when reviewing claims | 9% |
| IPSA's systems and processes are too complicated or cumbersome | 7% |
| Specific personal/circumstantial comments | 1% |
| Non-specific comments | 4% |

*n.b. some responses contained multiple suggestions falling into more than one category. As such the percentages in the rightmost column add to more than 100%

IPSA's payroll support

We asked respondents about the payroll tools available to MPs through the Online Expenses system, namely the staff budget report and the online staff timesheets. We also asked respondents about the payroll tools available on IPSA's website, namely the job description tool and the staff contract tool. Results for these questions were mixed, with some payroll tools notably more utilised and more popular than others and some tools polarising respondents. Qualitative responses suggested that whilst there is widespread appreciation of payroll tools, they can be improved.

Staffing budget report

Only MPs have access to the staff budget report tool. 50% of MPs who responded to this question (15 MPs) were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied*, down from 64% last year. 23% (7 MPs) were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied* compared to 16% last year.

Online timesheets

IPSA provides a timesheet facility for use by MPs, their proxies and staff. Here staff can register any overtime for an MP to authorise. 40% of MPs who completed this question (12 MPs), 46% of proxies, and 56% of staff, however, have not used the tool.

20% of MPs (6 MPs) said they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the tool compared to 25% last year. 10% (3 MPs) said they were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied* compared to 10% last year.

19% of proxies were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied*, down from 21% last year. 15% saying they were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*, up from 11 % last year

Staff were less positive, with 16% saying they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied*, with the same proportion stating they were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*.

Job Description Tool

We asked respondents their views on the online Job Description Tool where users can make customised job descriptions when MPs are hiring members of staff.

27% of MPs who completed this question (8 MPs) said that they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the tool, down from 41% last year. 33% (10 MPs) were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*, up from 23% last year.

10% (3 MPs) said they had never used the tool.

57% of proxies were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the tool up from 48% last year. 23% were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*, down from 24% last year. A smaller percentage than MPs said they had never used the tool, just 5%.


40% of ordinary staff have never used the tool. 36% stated that they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied*, up from 30% last year. 13% were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*., down from 14% last year.

Staff Contract Tool

We asked respondents their views on the online Staff Contract Tool where users can create contracts for hiring members MPs' staff.

27% of MPs who completed this question (8 MPs) said that they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied* with the contract tool, a fall from 48% last year. 27% (8 MPs) said they were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied* compared to 18% last year.

64% of proxies said that they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied*, up from 57% last year. 13% were either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied* compared to 14% last year.



The job description tool is at times too prescriptive - although I appreciate it is clear to have specific roles and that these fall within pay grades. There is also no clear guidance about what is required if individuals are being employed under two roles - or across elements of two different roles

An MP's staff member



As regards staff members, almost half, 46%, said they had never used the tool. This was the same as the figure last year. The result is not unexpected as most contracts are constructed by MPs as the employer, or by their designated proxies. 36% of staff said they were either *Very satisfied* or *Fairly satisfied*, up from 32% last year. 10% either *Very dissatisfied* or *Fairly dissatisfied*, down from 12% last year.

We also asked MPs and staff how IPSA could improve the payroll support it provides. Of the 127 responses we received, the answers broadly fell within the following categories:

| Response | Percentage of all responses* |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Improve the online payroll tools (job description tool and contract tool): inflexible and not encompassing enough, difficult to combine job descriptions. | 34% |
| Change staff budget report: make it more accurate/ make it more accessible/ available to proxies/ a more regular report. | 13% |
| Improve the timesheet tool | 8% |
| Provide clearer advice: more in-depth information, more timely communication of any changes | 6% |
| Remedy IT/technical issues: website usability issues, timing out and error difficulties, have the payroll tools integrated with the other IPSA systems | 5% |
| Address administrative issues: processing paperwork, responding to emails, loss of documents, missed payments | 5% |
| No improvements needed/general praise | 5% |
| Specific personal/circumstantial comments | 4% |
| Make forms easier to find on the website | 2% |
| IPSA to provide HR support to MPs' staff | 2% |
| Make payroll services available offline. | 1% |
| Better training for IPSA staff | 1% |
| Non-specific/not applicable/"Don't know" | 8% |

*n.b. some responses contained multiple suggestions falling into more than one category.

As such the percentages in the rightmost column add to more than 100%


MPs' use of business costs and expenses

We asked MPs and their proxies if they had decided **not** to submit a claim over the past year to IPSA for any expenses or business costs, despite believing that they could have been reimbursed. 90% of MPs who completed this question (27 MPs) said they had not claimed for eligible expenses in the last 12 months, a rise from 82% who said the same thing last year. For proxies, the figure was lower at 54%, a fall from 60% last year.

The most common reasons given by MPs and proxies who did not make a claim were:

| Reason | Percentage of MPs who gave this reason last year | Percentage of MPs who gave this reason <u>this year</u> | Percentage of Proxies who gave this reason last year | Percentage of Proxies who gave this reason <u>this year</u> |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| The claim process was too complicated | 39% | 41% | 15% | 23% |
| It was only a small claim | 61% | 67% | 42% | 65% |
| It would take too long | 41% | 48% | 18% | 18% |
| I was not sure if it was claimable | 14% | 15% | 12% | 24% |
| I wasn't sure what amount I could claim for | N/A | 15% | N/A | 8% |
| I was concerned about the claim being published | 34% | 52% | 21% | 50% |
| I was worried the claim would be rejected | 14% | 11% | 10% | 14% |
| Don't Know | 0% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| Other reason | 14% | 19% | 12% | 12% |

Most MPs and proxies gave a combination of the above reasons. MPs and proxies who gave the answer “Other reason” were asked to explain their answer. Respondents cited negative press coverage for small value items as a reason for not submitting a claim and some explained that they did not want to submit and have claims published for small amounts, particularly for mileage and travel.



I didn't want my costs to be higher than other MPs just because of my family's travel.

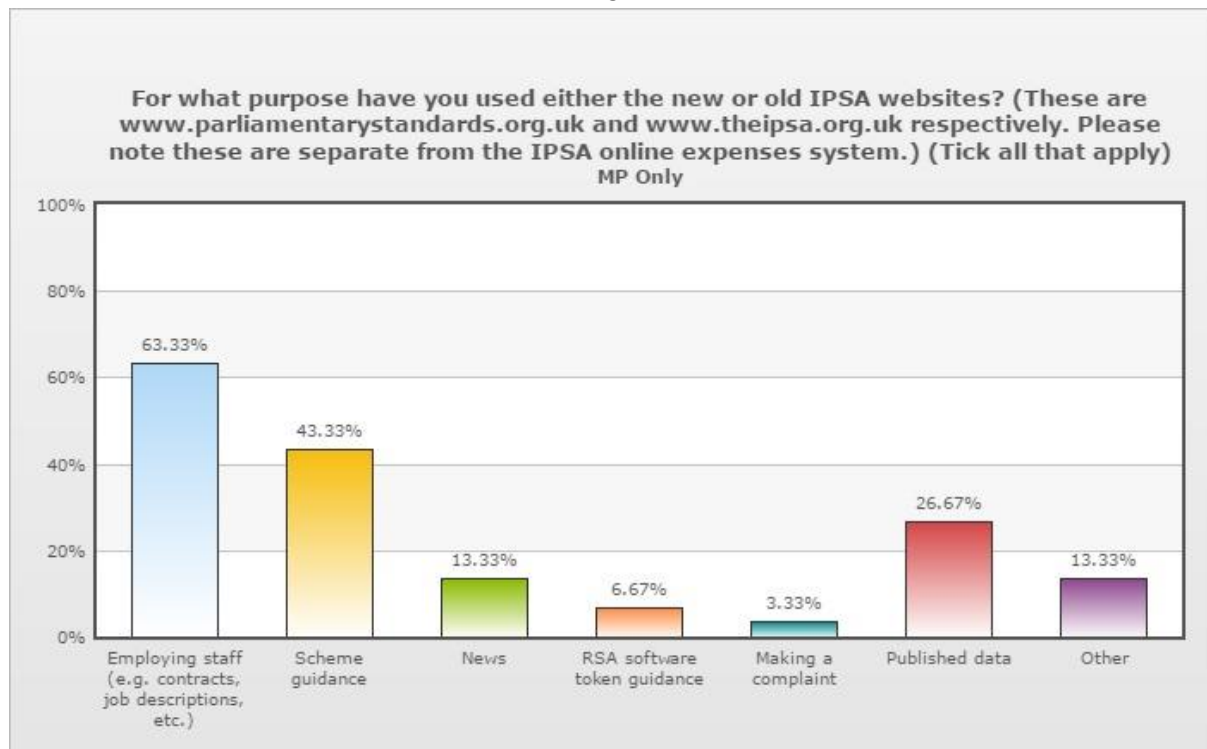
An MP



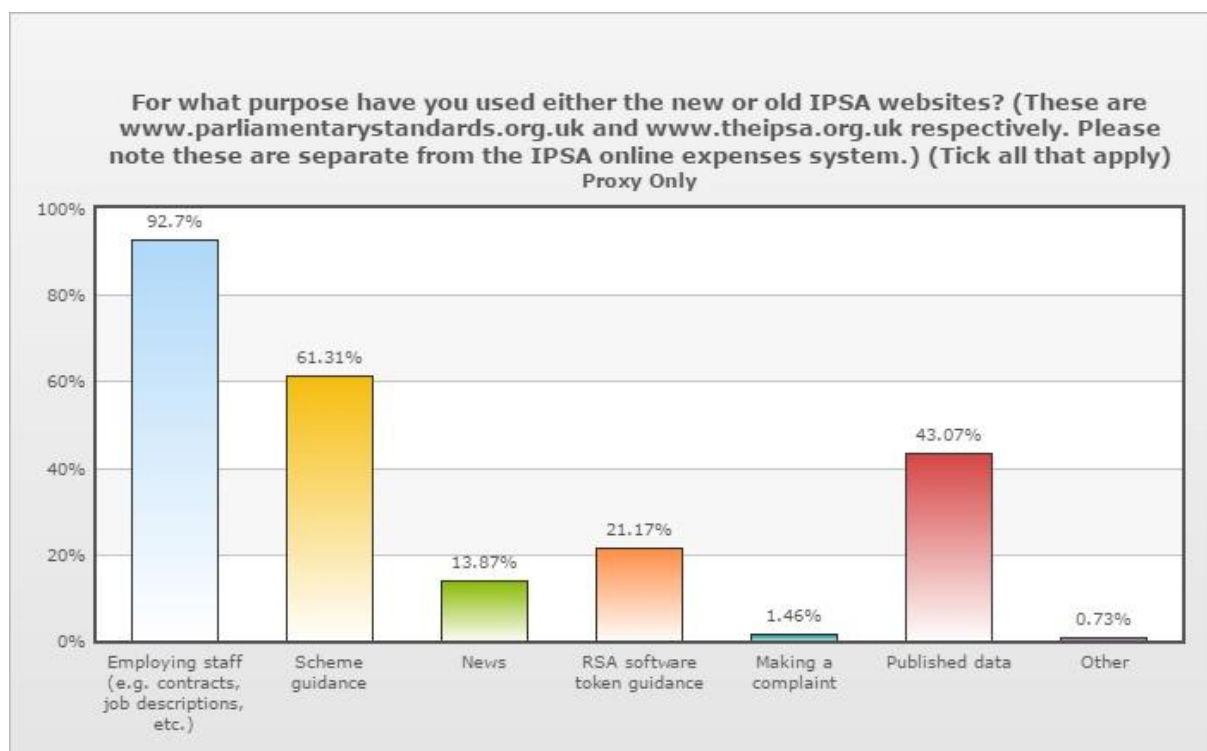
IPSA's website

Earlier in the survey we asked MPs, their proxies, and their staff to rate the usefulness of information and communications on IPSA's new and old websites. The old website remains live in order to give MPs and their staff access to archived documents until the end of 2017. We are interested in gauging how MPs and their staff use the old as well as the new website, and also their views on the quality of the new website as a whole, including its user-friendliness, appearance, general function, and ease of use.

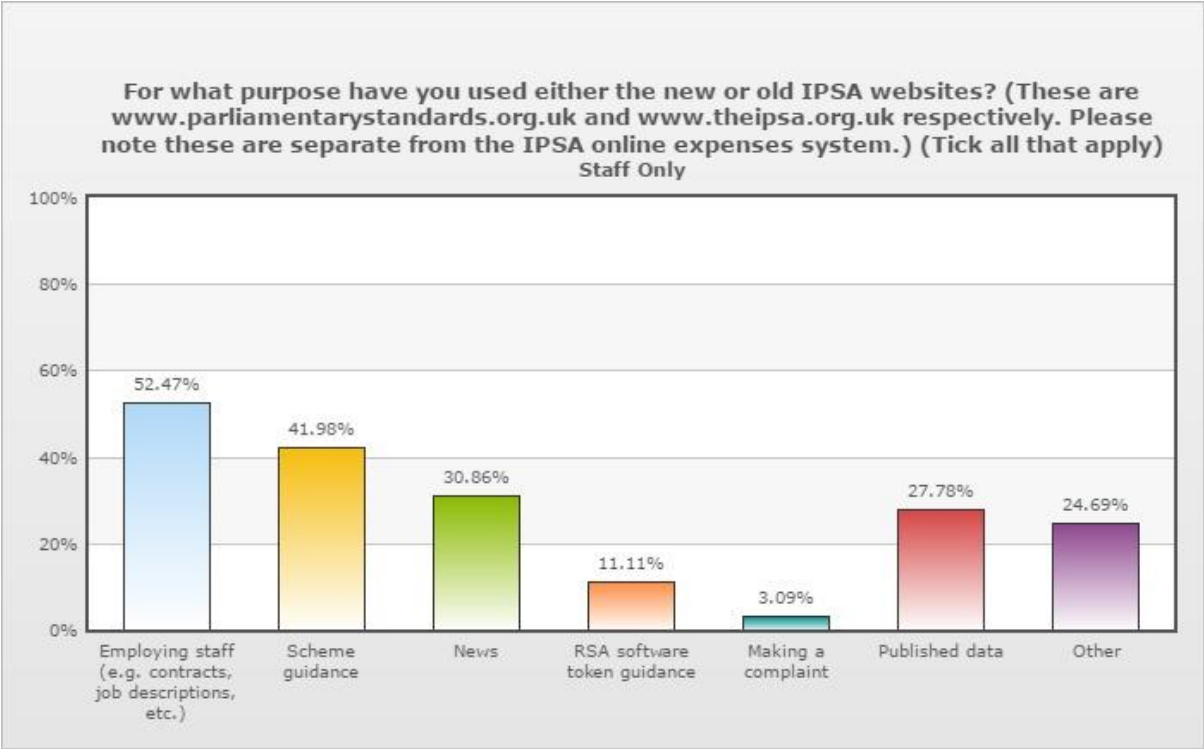
We asked respondents to tell us for what purposes they used the IPSA websites. The results were:



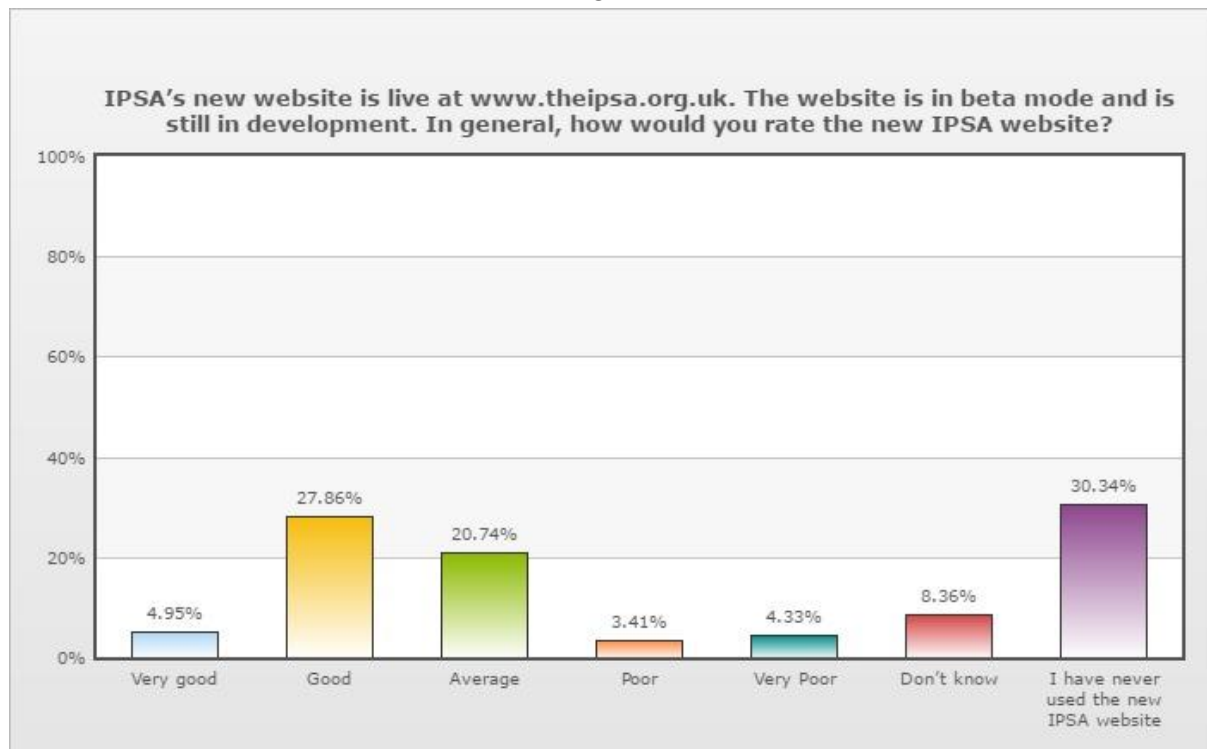
Unsurprisingly, a larger proportion of MPs and proxies than staff use the websites for staff employment tools and guidance on the Scheme.



A much larger proportion of proxies compared to MPs and staff have used the websites for guidance on using an RSA software token and to access published data. Staff were by far the largest group to use the website to see IPSA news.



We asked all respondent groups to rate our new website. There was some distinction between the results of the different respondent groups. The overall results were:



17% of MPs who completed this question (5 MPs) rated our new website as either *Very good* or *Good*, as did 28% of Proxies, and 40% of Staff said the same.

13% of MPs (4 MPs) rated it as either *Very poor* or *Poor*, as did 6% of proxies. 8% of staff rated it as either *Very poor* or *Poor*.

30% of all respondents had never used the new website.

We asked respondents to tell us further how they thought IPSA's new website could be improved. Of the 76 suggestions we received the answers broadly fell within the following categories:

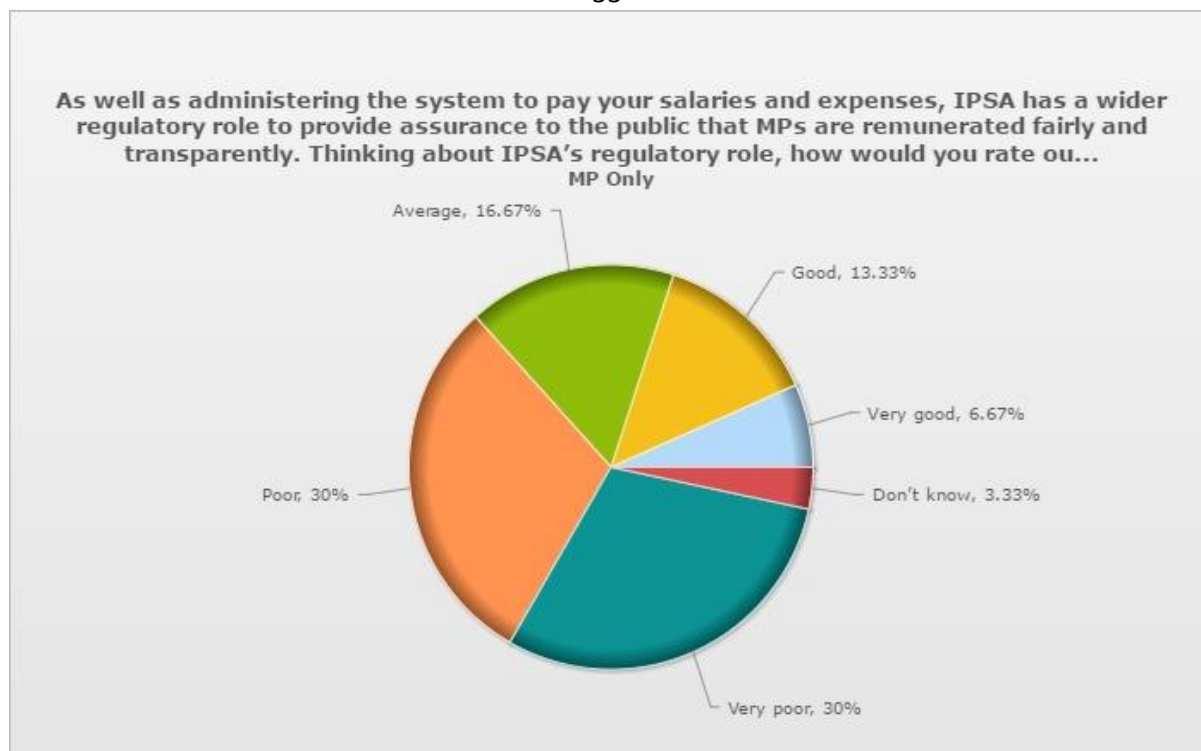
| Suggestion | Percentage of all responses* |
|---|------------------------------|
| Streamlining: more clear and easy to follow information/a more user friendly interface with easier navigation | 22% |
| Move information specifically for MPs and MPs' staff from old website to new website | 22% |
| Suggestion not applicable to the new website/respondent has confused the new IPSA website with the Online Expenses System | 9% |
| Improved categorisation of forms | 8% |
| Resume use of the old website/ respondent preferred the old website | 8% |
| Improve the accuracy of information and guidance on the website | 7% |
| Improved search tool | 5% |
| More clearly delineated publication of expenses | 4% |
| Improved payroll tools on the website | 3% |
| More frequent updating of information, forms, and documents | 1% |
| Don't know/non-specific comments | 20% |

*n.b. some responses contained multiple suggestions falling into more than one category. As such the percentages in the rightmost column add to more than 100%.

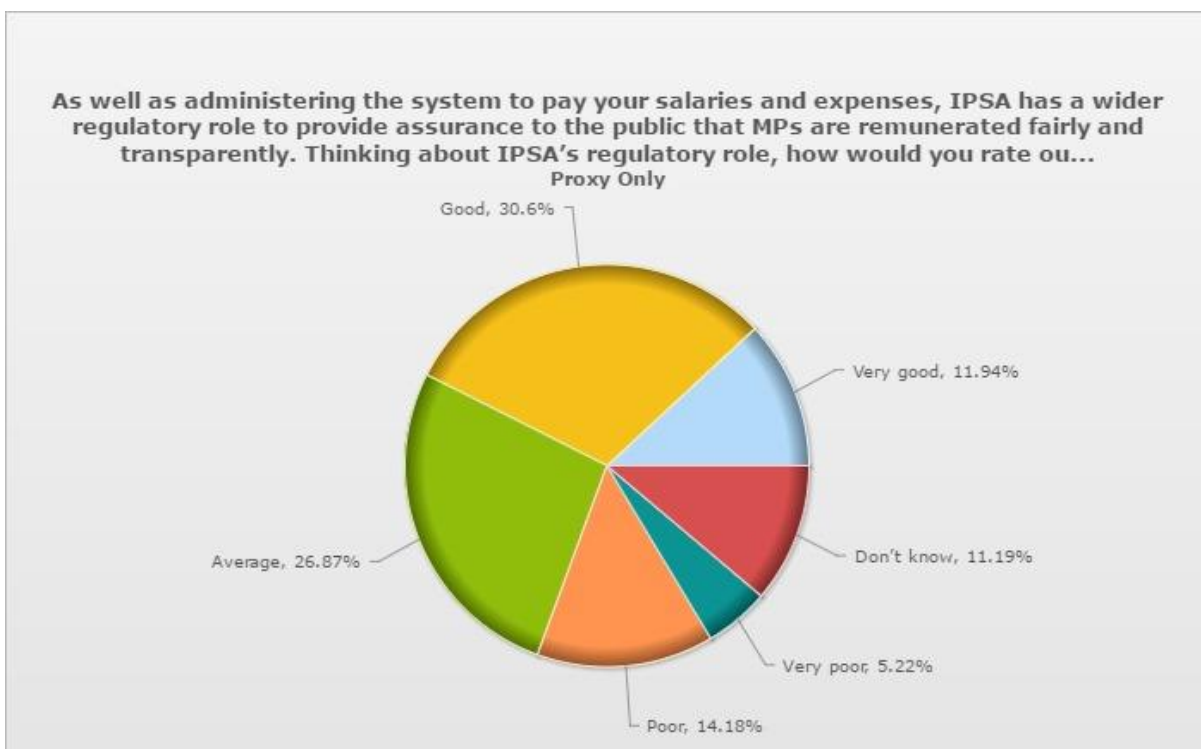
IPSA's regulatory role

We asked MPs, their proxies, and their staff to rate IPSA's regulatory role, as distinct from the day-to-day support we provide to MPs.

Among MPs who completed this question, 20% (6 MPs) rated IPSA's regulatory performance as either *Very good* or *Good*, a fall from last year's 32%. 60% (18 MPs) rated it as either *Poor* or *Very poor* compared to a lower 34% last year.

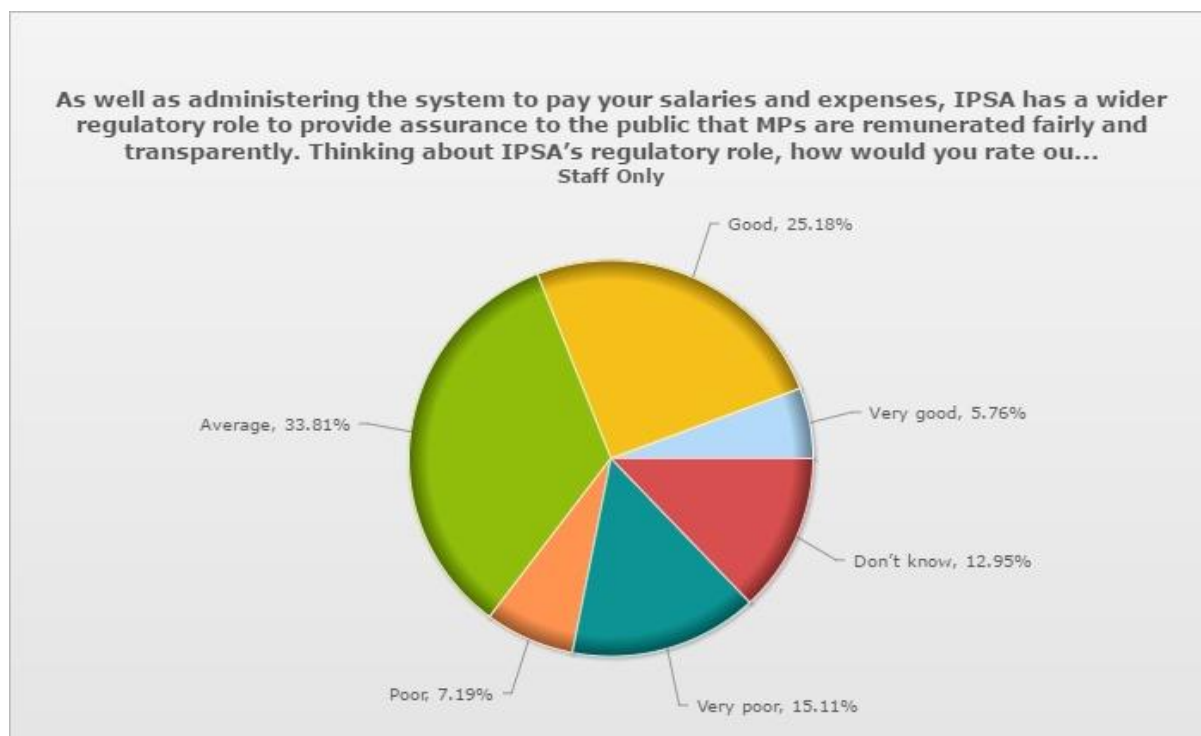


MPs' proxies were slightly more positive – 42% rating IPSA's regulatory role as either *Very good* or *Good* up from 38% last year. 29% rated it as either *Poor* or *Very poor*, an increase from last year's 15%.



Amongst ordinary staff, results were more positive than those from MPs but less than those from proxies. 31% of staff rated IPSA's regulatory performance as either *Very good* or *Good*,

lower than 33% last year. 22% of staff rated IPSA's performance as either *Poor* or *Very poor*, slightly higher than last year's 20%.



We asked respondents why they rated IPSA's regulatory role in this way. Of the 69 responses to this question, negative responses included comments that IPSA does not defend MPs when they spend money legitimately, and continued disappointment at increases to MP salaries. Some respondents blamed IPSA for allegedly publishing incorrect figures for their or their MPs' expenses. Positive responses included comments regarding IPSA's independence, transparency, and regulatory success.

IPSA should also defend an MP's worth. I don't think it does this very well at all

An MP's proxy

I think overall IPSA does a good job of administering a difficult and complex service.

An MP's staff member

I am happy with your performance

An MP

Despite some frustrations working with IPSA and finding it difficult to budget effectively as a result, I can appreciate the wider role and the need to be scrupulous.

An MP's proxy

IPSA does not, on the most fundamental level, understand the work of an MP's office.

An MP's staff member

System is good but not perfect
- some MPs (not me) harbour adversarial views of IPSA

An MP

ANNEX A – PERSONAL DATA

The survey did not ask respondents for their personal details and, therefore, the responses to the survey were anonymous. Individuals could not be identified from the responses, unless personal data was entered into the free text fields.

At the beginning of the survey, MPs and their proxies were informed that the survey would be conducted anonymously and that we may disclose quantitative or qualitative data, including in response to a Freedom of Information request. Where any of the data might identify an individual, respondents were aware that we would withhold that information

ANNEX B – METHODOLOGY

The survey was built using the Smart Survey tool available online. A link to the survey was included in an email of 30 November 2016 to MPs and their staff from IPSA, inviting them to take part in the survey. A further reminder email and reminders through regular IPSA bulletin emails were sent during the following weeks until the survey closed on 13 January 2017. This resulted in a total of 366 responses; 35 MPs, 153 MP proxies, and 178 non-proxy members of staff.