



July 2018

Findings from  
the General  
Election Survey  
of MPs and their  
staff  
2017

## Background

This report summarises the findings from research interviews undertaken following the 2017 General Election. A similar exercise was carried out following the 2015 General Election. Evaluation of the programme to support MPs and staff during the snap 2017 General Election was carried out as part of the overall evaluation exercise of the IPSA General Election programme. Qualitative interviews were carried out with 32 participants, who self-selected, so although there was a good representation of political parties and gender, the results cannot be viewed as being representative of all MPs. However, it provides an overview of opinions and insights on IPSA's service provision to help IPSA when preparing for future elections, whether planned or not, and in continuing the IPSA improvement programme work.

Following the snap General Election held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017, IPSA were keen to capture immediate feedback to evaluate the success of their programme to support MPs and staff during the 2017 General Election. In anticipation of the General Election in 2015, IPSA was able to commit and deploy a significant amount of time and resources in the run up to this first election since IPSA's creation. For the 2017 election, no such run-in period was possible, so IPSA's ability to plan for and respond to a snap election was called into play. The aims of the IPSA 2017 Election programme were to:

- Put MPs at the centre of planning and work
- Strive for excellence and continuous improvement in ways of working
- Provide assurance that public money is well regulated

A wider evaluation exercise of the General Election programme was carried out on five major topics:

- MPs' experience of IPSA
- Resourcing (Staff and Equipment)
- Events
- Working with the House
- Governance, Budgeting and Assurance

This report focuses on the first of these topics and is based on the collection of views of MPs and their staff's experiences of IPSA during the period immediately after the election.

## Methodology

Interviews were carried out with MPs and their staff – new, returned and non-returning - from around the country and from different political parties. The interviews were qualitative and lasted between 30 minutes and an hour and were conducted in MPs' offices in Westminster or the constituency, or occasionally by phone. The discussion guide used to focus discussion is at Appendix A. The interviews were carried out by an independent researcher who was not part of the IPSA

permanent team, who spent some time with IPSA staff to get their perspective on what went well and what could be improved for the future. This report is wholly based on the input from MPs and their staff, analysing their insights as users and how they experienced the services provided and their views of the overall regulatory framework for the Election.

## Interview Sample

All MPs and staff were invited to participate in the feedback exercise through a direct communication sent out in late August 2017, about two months after the election. This was followed up several times. The sample were self-selecting and 32 interviews were carried out.

Key data on the interview sample:

- 24 constituencies were involved – 14 were Conservative, seven Labour and three SNP
- 19 men and 13 women took part
- Two interviews were with MPs who had stood down
- Six interviews were with MPs or their proxy staff who were defeated and /or lost their posts after the election
- No new MPs agreed to take part – one interview was conducted with a proxy for a newly elected MP
- 20 MPs and 12 proxy staff were interviewed

New MPs and their teams were reluctant to take part, stating pressures on their time and the low priority they felt towards giving feedback to IPSA at this point. It is recommended that further research be considered, combining the efforts of IPSA and the House of Commons Evaluation and Insight team, to more fully understand the issues faced by new MPs and their staff when entering Parliament.

Interview notes were written up and anonymised and analysed to identify emerging themes from the discussions and conversations and drawn into insights for consideration by IPSA. Hard data from IPSA's systems has been reviewed to see to what extent they support these insights. The feedback and insights generated through the research should not be considered as a comprehensive representation of the views of MPs and staff towards IPSA. However it provides insight into the range of experiences of IPSA's election programme as well as wider feedback around IPSA's processes and policies.

## Election-specific findings

The service offered by IPSA to MPs over the Dissolution period and immediately after the election was felt to be good.

‘I thought IPSA did a good job on the election – it was a short timeframe and was a test of whether the rules on dissolution were clear. Although I didn’t attend the (IPSA) drop-in sessions, it was good to know they were there for others’ – Returned MP

‘Each Member’s office is a small business, and when a new MP is elected it feels like you pretty much have to start from scratch, but IPSA have provided a guiding hand on many areas’ – Proxy for an MP

‘Following my defeat at the election, my PA got another job almost immediately and a different member of staff took on the proxy role. IPSA staff worked hard to help us both understand the position, but it contributed to the length of time taken to wind up my business. Claims for expenses over the election period fell to the bottom of my to-do list at this time, and I only found out afterwards that I couldn’t claim as I was over the 90 day time limit’ – Defeated MP

Specific mentions of IPSA relating to the General Election were made (by some, not all) of:

- Extended opening hours, including weekends and evenings, were welcomed;
- Arrangements for supporting departing MPs at the Departed Members Area (DMA) were praised by all who used them;
- Feedback on the change from a resettlement payment to a loss of office payment was very negative, particularly from departed MPs, especially younger ones with families;
- Departed members spoke positively about the help and support they had received from individual account managers and payroll team members, however some struggled to wind up their affairs quickly because of the departure of their staff and/or the removal of key equipment by the Parliamentary Digital Service;
- The way that defeated MPs are expected to work to wind up their offices and manage their staff without pay. MPs felt that the policy was written to suit a five-year fixed term, not a snap election and needed to be revisited;
- Dissolution guidance was well received, praised for its clarity and arrived in good time;
- Allowing MPs and staff to use their IT equipment and email accounts on payment of £100 during dissolution was viewed positively. IPSA’s role in this was not visible to respondents;
- Those who attended drop-in sessions or rang for advice (mostly 2015 intake) were positive about the advice they received and the fact that IPSA provided these sessions – established MPs knew the ropes.

The following insights were generated as a result of discussions with respondents about their understanding of the **role and purpose of IPSA** and the extent to which they supported it. Overall, interviewees were aware of the role and purpose of IPSA, but they don't always support it, not generally because they don't think it should exist, but because they perceive it to have made their job more difficult. There was very low awareness of the Compliance Officer role and its relationship to IPSA.

'There was a them and us culture initially, but most of this has been broken down' – Returned MP, elected in 2005

'IPSA has improved beyond recognition since it was set up – staff and MPs get paid, rent and bills are paid and in the last couple of years, IPSA has found its feet' – Returned MP, elected in 2005

'I was made to feel that IPSA were there to stop MPs cheating and that felt offensive, particularly as I am not yet in pocket since taking this job' – Returned MP, elected in 2015

'If you play by the rules and ask for advice, it's pretty clear what you need to do, although some of the IT and systems are quite clunky' – Defeated MP, elected in 2010

'I do the IPSA stuff myself – if in doubt, I don't put it (a claim) through as I don't want to attract any more attention to expenses when they are published (by IPSA)' – Returned MP, elected in 2010

An MP elected in 2015 said: 'When I became an MP I bought some IT equipment for my team from the set up budget. When I needed further IT equipment, I struggled to get advice from IPSA or the HoC's Digital Service and felt fobbed off between the two – I ended up buying the machine out of my own pocket.'

An MP who stood down at the 2017 election said: 'I met both IPSA and House of Commons HR staff at the Departed Members Area after the election. The information I was given by IPSA about holiday entitlement for my staff was rubbish by the House of Commons HR person, leaving me none the wiser.'

Specific themes which came up in the context of IPSA's purpose included the following:

- Publication of data about MPs' claims creates negative media coverage and can undermine their role and allows political opponents to make mischief – this was a particular issue for some during the election campaign;

- IPSA don't do enough to educate the public or media about legitimate costs of running MPs' office or explain difference in MPs' costs, for example due to constituency size or location;
- Confusion about IPSA's role and that of the House of Commons HR, Security or Digital teams. This lead to frustration, particularly over the election period, when advice given by IPSA differed from that given by those in the House;

## Relationships with IPSA

Respondents were asked about the **frequency and quality of their relationship with IPSA** and this revealed that MPs and proxy staff like and value personal contact with IPSA staff, but the relationship is purely functional for many. MPs and their staff are very busy, and although there is high reputational risk attached to expenses claims, most MPs and their staff put dealing with IPSA well down their list of priorities. This does provide an opportunity for IPSA to leverage greater value out of their account and payroll manager relationships.

'I don't want to be micro-managed by IPSA so am not looking for a business partner – I'm much happier with the idea of a relationship manager, who stays in touch with me' – Returned MP, elected in 2015

'IPSA staff have a good understanding of payroll issues – their knowledge of this complex area saves us having to employ another member of staff (to look after HR issues)' – Long standing Proxy for Returned MP

On account managers 'Once you have an individual who knows your situation, it makes things a lot easier' – Defeated MP

'I do sometimes ring the account manager, but other staff are just as good' – Returned MP, elected in 1997

'IPSA are really clear on boundaries, I am confident in the advice I am given and have never had to wait for a response' – Proxy for MP elected in 2017

'I was allocated an account manager when I was elected in 2015, but they've now left IPSA and I haven't been given a replacement' – Returned MP

Specific feedback included:

- All respondents found IPSA staff were helpful and worked hard to get an answer to their questions and resolve their issues;

- Staff were praised for their knowledge of the Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses – some commented that this had not always been the case and was in contrast to their experiences in the early days of IPSA's operation
- Around half of all respondents were happy to ring the support line 'blind' as they felt any member of the team could answer their question;
- Very few respondents gave examples of proactivity by IPSA staff, but where it did happen, it was appreciated. Several MPs specifically mentioned they did not want or need their IPSA account manager to be a business partner – others were keen to receive more support or 'relationship management' services.

## Policies and Processes

Most of the feedback generated during the interviews was about different elements of IPSA's **policies or processes**. Those which were mentioned by at least five MPs have been included here as they would be worth exploring further.

There was a perception by some MPs that the system of **re-imbursments** means that MPs have to carry debt, creating resentment and reinforcing the view held by some MPs that IPSA rules favour wealthier MPs. This was further reinforced by what was perceived as the inadequate Loss of Office Payments for MPs when they lost their seat at a General Election.

'People often step outside their substantive careers to become an MP and, if they are defeated, there should be a proper transition period which recognises this sacrifice, as we need people to seek office' – Returned MP

'I try to use the procurement card or get my bills paid directly as much as possible, but still find I am carrying some debt – typically £6-800 per month, which I think is unfair' – Returned MP

Evidence which supported this insight include the following:

- Some MPs and proxy staff are not aware of flexibilities like advance payments or direct payments which can make their life easier;
- MPs do not always have a business bank account to run their office so they carry debt on personal accounts. This also leads to problems in authorising payments;
- The IPSA payment card is well used, but limits and extensions could be better understood;
- Time series data on IPSA's suspensions of MPs payment cards indicate that election periods are particularly problematic for MPs needing to reconcile their card payments and would seem to indicate that they need more time to do so during this period. Further analysis of issues faced by users might lead to some changes in communications around reconciliation periods to raise compliance rates.

Some MPs felt that **IPSA policies and cost ceilings on office and staffing budgets** were inflexible and do not accommodate the different ways in which MPs choose to carry out their roles.

‘I felt like I was being penalised [by IPSA’s budgets] for being an ordinary person, who wanted to serve the public, **and** represent the constituency I was part of **and** spend time with my family’ – Defeated MP

‘I would like more flexibility on budgets. In my case, I am well within my office and staffing budgets, but have struggled to find suitable accommodation near Westminster within the budget’ - Returned MP

‘I am generally underspent on my staffing budget, as I have been an MP for some years, and have a stable team, but my constituency office is getting old and needs re-furbishing and re-equipping, so some flexibility on budgets would be appreciated’ – Returned MP, held seat for over 20 years

Several said that the Scheme rules were drafted by IPSA staff who do not understand the role and life of an MP and their offices. A number of variables affecting MPs’ costs and expenses were mentioned, including:

- The location of the MP’s office and constituency
- Life cycle of the MP (new vs long established, marginal vs safe seat)
- Career aspiration of the MP (Parliament-facing vs constituency facing)
- Security considerations
- MP’s family situation

## IPSA Communications

Finally, there were a number of observations made about IPSA’s **communications** and the extent to which IPSA’s email messages were received and understood given MPs’ very busy working arrangements. Most respondents mentioned the Bulletin, regularly issued by IPSA, and found it a useful source of information, with the proviso that items were kept short and to the point.

‘The Bulletin is useful, as long as it is kept simple and to the point. I don’t want IPSA to use Twitter to communicate with me – it just gives me another job to do’ – Returned MP

The website was used for forms and guidance, but little else and often the default for finding any information was to ring the MP support team. Very few knew that IPSA had a Twitter account and



when raised they did not think it a useful channel for operational information. Some were happy to receive SMS updates for timely information, such as service desk closures or taxi claims.

Respondents were asked to summarise their relationship with IPSA in a couple of words		
Positive	Mixed/neutral	Negative
Professional and supportive Pretty reasonable, difficult in the beginning Very helpful – a valued relationship Hugely improved – good by the end Business-like Perfectly smooth Necessary – a part of the way the place works Friendly – a good working relationship	Improving Friendly but heavy touch – they control the money Good people – bad processes Pleasantly unprofessional Aspects are good – much to improve IPSA doesn't give way	Inefficient and inconsistent Not user friendly Corrupt and leaky Anti-MP Infuriating and patronising Needs a re-think Lack of trust and time consuming

## Next Steps and Recommendations

In response to the insights generated by the feedback survey, a number of recommendations were suggested for consideration by the IPSA Senior Management Team, Executive Team and the IPSA Board. Action is now underway in most areas, several require further research to pinpoint the issue more precisely. They are summarised in the table below and developed further in the last section of the report, which is divided into the following topics:

- Election-specific work
- Public engagement and understanding the role of IPSA
- Engagement with MP stakeholders and other partners
- Policy areas
- Communications

Recommendation	Owner in IPSA	Timetable
Continue planning for future General Elections, including working with GEPG in the House	Operations team	Ongoing
Explore solutions re administrative support for newly elected MPs	Operations team	To be published summer 2018
Review Loss of Office payments policy as part of the 2018 Review of MPs' pay	Policy Team	Pay consultation ends June 15 2018
Develop further IPSA's proactive public engagement activities	Communications team	Public Engagement Strategy reviewed, Summer 2018
Develop a full engagement plan for all stakeholders and partners including routine 'health check' of these relationships	Communications and operations teams	Ongoing
Further improvement of IPSA account management approach	Operations team	Ongoing
Assurance review on office costs budgets	Policy team	Review underway
Improve IPSA's database integration and ensure all communications activity is personalised wherever possible	Communications and IT teams	Planned as part of IPSA Online activity
Conduct further joint research with the HoC on new MPs' requirements following a General Election	Communications team	Being considered as part of ongoing joint working arrangements

## Election-specific work

IPSA should continue to build on its current working arrangements. This includes preparing for both a snap General Election and a planned one, working closely with the House authorities to make sure lessons learned from the last two elections are taken on board. Regular review periods should be maintained for all guidance documents and holding joint contingency or desk-planning exercises for a snap election.

Departing MPs reported struggling to wind up their business affairs with IPSA quickly because of a lack of administrative support once their permanent team found new roles. There is also anecdotal evidence that new MPs struggle to set up their Parliamentary offices and absorb the volume of information they are faced with on the business management and expenses processes alongside their new role.

It is recommended that IPSA work alongside the House authorities to explore whether providing a temporary administrative support team might alleviate some of these issues. A solution to be explored could be provided by the Civil Service Surge and Rapid Response Team (SRRT) which has been successfully deployed by Home Office, Civil Aviation Authority, Department for Transport, HM Courts and Tribunal Service and the Department for Communities and Local Government. They can provide experienced, security-cleared customer service and administrative staff within 24 hours of activation who can be deployed in constituency offices, as well as in Westminster.

Given the extent of feedback from both departing and returning MPs, it is recommended that Loss of Office Payments is considered explicitly as part of the 2018 review of MPs' pay. The feedback provided by participants in this survey has been shared with the IPSA Policy team.

## Public engagement and understanding the role of IPSA

One of IPSA's current objectives relates to public confidence: "We assure the public that MPs are reimbursed from the public purse only for legitimate costs to support their parliamentary activity." The IPSA Board agreed in November 2017 to enhance IPSA's public engagement activity, including some public consultation on IPSA future strategy, closer working with the House authorities Parliamentary Outreach Team and publishing more details on the IPSA website about IPSA's working documents.

A more proactive public engagement approach could include a wider speaking programme for members of IPSA's Senior Management Team and selected profile-raising activities amongst politically-aware audiences like civil servants and influencers like the Institute for Government.

## Engagement with MP Stakeholders and other partners

Genuine two-way engagement brings benefits both ways. It helps MPs and their staff to understand IPSA's role and build goodwill. It also ensures IPSA staff fully understand how MPs operate their

offices which increases the likelihood that policies are developed which encourage compliance and meet MPs' needs as well as providing best value for the taxpayer.

Engagement at all levels is important. The IPSA Executive Team need to be visible and a quarterly programme of meetings and shadowing of MPs is recommended as well as continued regular attendance by an IPSA Director at the MPs' Staff User Group and other meetings with MPs. There is potential for the IPSA account management team to build on their existing positive profile with MPs and staff by segmenting their user base more strongly and targeting a more proactive service to those who are keen to receive more business support. This could be supplemented by a regular programme of workshops run with current and new partners to position IPSA as a 'helpful business partner', targeting areas where there is evidence that MPs and their staff struggle, or where there are strong reputational risks. These might include subjects like: choosing and running a constituency office; recruiting the right MP support team; The Digital MP; and Financial Management for MPs. An outline of possible workshop topics and partners can be found at Appendix B.

Engagement with partners is also vital to ensure IPSA's agenda for improvement is understood and business-critical activities are supported appropriately within partner organisations. Participants in the survey reported some confusion about roles and responsibilities between IPSA and other groups in the House. This has also been noted during the implementation of the IPSA Online Homepage which required significant joint working between IPSA and the House of Commons Digital Services team. It is recommended that IPSA reviews its current partner engagement activity to clarify ownership of key relationships, gauge the current status of these relationships and ensure a plan is in place to strengthen them where necessary. Business-critical relationships, for example with the Parliamentary Digital Service, should have a senior-level sponsor with quarterly engagement taking place as well as routine engagement at operational level.

## Policy areas

IPSA policies and cost ceilings on office and staffing budgets were an issue for most participants in the survey and it is noted that an assurance review is now being carried out in respect of MPs' office costs budgets. The results of this policy review could provide useful content to inform the workshops outlined in the section on engagement, as well as providing a possible hook for some public engagement activity when the assurance report is published.

## Communications

At the point when the interviews for the survey were carried out, IPSA's main communication vehicle was through a fortnightly Bulletin emailed to each MP and staff member. Apart from the IPSA website, this was the main source of news from IPSA and was mostly supported as a way of receiving essential information about changes to business processes. With the introduction of the IPSA Online Homepage, there is the potential for communications to be further personalised to the individual. To ensure this is fully exploited may require the database which sits behind the IPSA CRM

system to link up with IPSA Online which means there will be one set of contacts which IPSA uses for all communication activity. Communications sent to individuals can be personalised, based on engagement levels.

IPSA should make better use of all the resources available to it for messaging. This could include the following: payslip messages and phonenumber messaging which regularly changes, reminders about reconciling payment cards and messages on financial statements and using the House of Commons communications channels, including the intranet and news bulletins.

Finally, further research with new MPs is recommended, working in conjunction with the Analysis and Insight team in the House of Commons, to uncover insights specific to this group of MPs and staff.

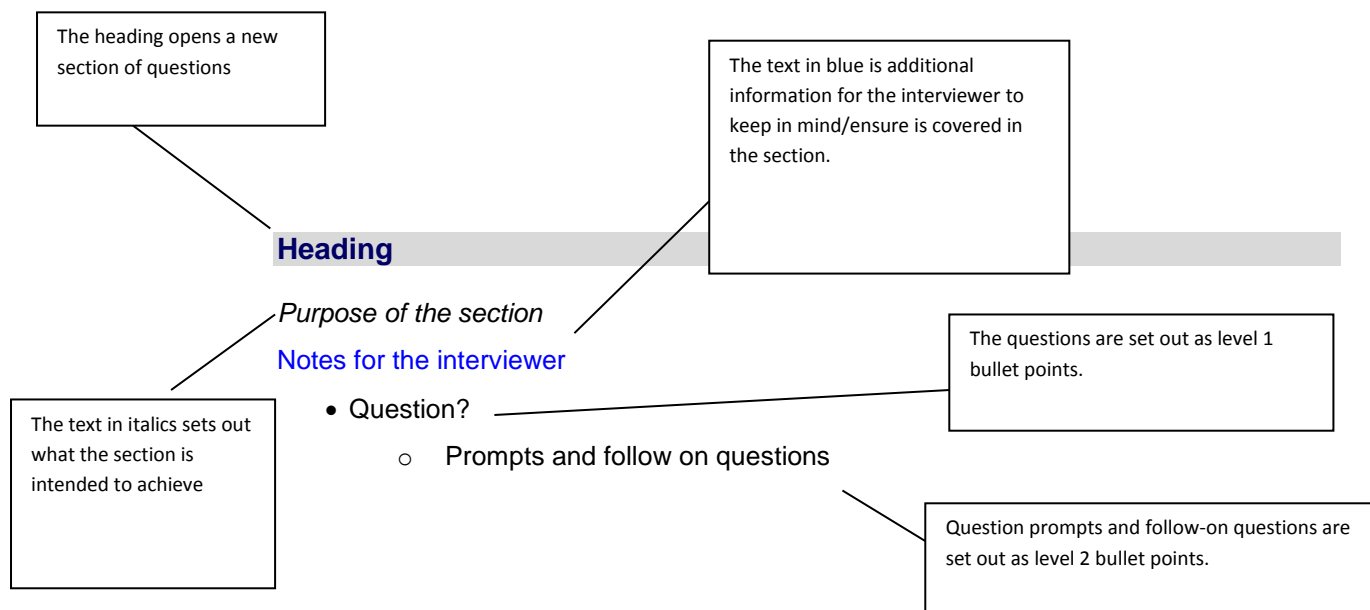
Appendix A

INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY  
GENERAL ELECTION survey  
Discussion guide for MP INTERVIEWS

**BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this discussion guide is to structure interviews with MPs, which will provide feedback on levels of satisfaction with services provided by IPSA during the immediate period around the 2017 General Election on June 8th. This information will allow IPSA to understand the extent to which IPSA's 2017 GE programme of work was effective in meeting its objectives and identify areas for continuous improvement. The interviews will also provide some evidence demonstrating whether IPSA has the confidence and support of MPs and their staff and if it is considered an operationally effective organisation with an appropriate regulatory framework for the Election.

**Using this guide**



Note: this discussion guide will be customised depending on the respondent's dealings with IPSA.

## Introduction and interviewee details

*Orientates interviewee, gets them prepared to take part in the interview. Outlines the 'rules' of the interview (including how we will use their responses in drafting any reports and possible publication)*

Thank participant for agreeing to take part in this interview.

Introduce self and background and objectives of the interview, emphasising that the interview focuses on their views of the support IPSA provides and focus on 2017 GE period.

As part of IPSA's commitment to deliver a high-quality service to MPs and their staff and put MPs at the heart of their work, I have been asked by them to carry out some research to assess how effectively IPSA performed during the period immediately before and following the General Election. I will be listening to views from a range of MPs and their staff – new, returning and non-returning, and from around the country and different political parties. I have spent some time already with IPSA staff to get their perspective on what went well and what could be improved for the future. But MPs input is really critical to make sure IPSA have your insights as users and how you experienced the services provided and the overall regulatory framework for the Election.

## Engagement with IPSA

*This section explores the respondent's understanding of the role of IPSA and the nature of contact and involvement with the organisation*

- I'd like to start by asking you to share your view of how you see the overall role and purpose of IPSA?  
*(the two main roles of IPSA are: to independently regulate MPs' pay, pensions, business costs and expenses; and to support MPs by paying salaries to them and their staff and to reimburse parliamentary expenses)*
  - Prompt: how well, if at all, would you say you understand the role of IPSA? How successfully is this communicated by IPSA, or by other bodies, e.g. House of Commons team? How could this be communicated more effectively?
- To your knowledge, which areas of work does IPSA have responsibility for?
  - Prompt: show a cue card listing a range of tasks (including some which IPSA is not responsible for) Which of these elements of IPSA's role are you aware of?
- And how well do you believe IPSA complements the work of other teams in this area?
  - Prompt: e.g. the House of Commons HR team, Electoral Commission, Office for Standards in Public Life, others?
- How frequently do you deal with IPSA (if at all)?
  - Prompt: is most engagement done through your staff or do you deal directly?
  - Did you know you have an IPSA account manager to call upon?
- Are you aware of the Compliance Officer role and how to appeal against decisions made by IPSA? Probe understanding and use of appeal system.

## Overall satisfaction with IPSA vs General Election experiences

*The following questions will identify the overall level of confidence and satisfaction with IPSA and capture feedback on the Scheme up front. It also aims to provide a comparison between IPSAs general performance and that during the election period.*

*For returning and departed MPs start here.*

- Overall, how effective do you feel IPSA has been in supporting you to carry out your parliamentary duties?
  - Prompt: e.g. has there been a change in your attitude towards IPSA? How long have you dealt with IPSA for?
  - Prompt: where could more progress be made?
  - How well do you think IPSA works with your staff?
  - How confident are you in understanding and applying the new IPSA Scheme rules to your business processes?
  - Do you recall receiving the new Scheme rules in March 2017?
  
- Thinking specifically about the period in the run-up to the GE and since, would you rate IPSA's performance at the same level?
  - If GE score is worse: Why do you say that? In what ways did the service differ?
  - If GE score is better: Why do you say that? In what ways did the service differ?

*For new MPs start here.*

- How effective do you feel IPSA has been in supporting you in your new parliamentary role?
  - Prompt: Why do you say that? In what ways did the service help or hinder you?

## Satisfaction with key areas of work during GE period

*Questions about satisfaction with key areas of work to enable the interviewer to surface underlying issues or areas of concern*

### Initial communications

*For Returned MPs start here.*

- Thinking about the time immediately after the election was called, do you remember receiving dissolution guidance? Prompt by showing information if required. This was in a pack of material from the House of Commons.
  - Follow up: how useful did you find this guidance? If they had been a sitting MP in the previous election, how did this guidance compare with that offered previously? Did you attend any of the daily drop-ins on offer about the Dissolution Guidance?
  
- Do you recall any communication from us immediately after your re-election inviting you to meet us? Prompt by showing information if required [letter from Vicky Fox?].



- Follow ups:
  - What were your immediate priorities in terms of IPSA's remit following the result? Did we meet your expectations?
  - Could we have done anything else to help in the immediate period? [DQ: is there any material we could show here? Any follow ups?]

*For Departed (Stood Down) start here.*

- Following your decision to stand down, what were your immediate priorities in terms of IPSA's remit? Did we meet your expectations?
- Could we have done anything else to help in the immediate period after your decision not to seek re-election? (Show letter sent to them, quick guides and section on the website)

*For Departed (Not re-elected) start here.*

- Thinking about the time immediately after the election was called, do you remember receiving dissolution guidance from us? Prompt by showing information if required.
  - Follow up: how useful did you find this guidance? If they had been a sitting MP in the previous election, how did this guidance compare with that offered previously?
- Do you recall any communication from us immediately after the election, inviting you to meet us? Prompt by showing information if required. (IPSA sent a letter by email inviting to DMA where there was a pack of material)
  - Follow ups: What were your immediate priorities in terms of IPSA's remit following the result? Did we meet your expectations?
  - Could we have done anything else to help in the immediate period?

*For new MPs start here.*

- Do you remember receiving anything from us in the Returning Officer's pack after your election? Prompt by showing letter included in the Pack, if required.
  - Follow ups: What were your immediate priorities in terms of IPSA's remit after being elected? Did we meet your expectations?
  - Could we have done anything else to help you before you first arrived at Parliament?

**Direct contact through events held during the election period**

*For Returned MPs start here.*

- Did you or your team attend any of the drop-ins or take up IPSA's offer of re-fresher training after the election?
  - Follow ups: If nothing attended, why was that? Probe if they were aware of them
  - If you attended, what did you think of the events?
- Have you made use of the extended hours for the phone-in service? How useful has this been? Were you aware that this was happening?

*For Departed (Stood Down) start here.*

- What was your experience of your first conversations with IPSA staff following your decision not to stand again?

- Follow ups: Did you or your team members meet IPSA staff prior to the GE?
- What, if anything, could IPSA have done better during those conversations prior to the GE? Did you find anything particularly useful? Probe: Materials, knowledgeable staff etc

*For Departed (Not re-elected) start here.*

- Did you receive an invitation from us to a meeting at 7 Millbank? Prompt by showing invite if required. And did you attend? Follow ups:
- If they did not attend: Why didn't you attend the meeting?
- If they did attend: what was your experience of the DMA meeting?
  - What did you understand to be the purpose of the meeting?
  - What, if anything, could we have done better during these conversations with you?
  - What, if anything, did you find particularly useful?

*For new MPs start here.*

- What was your experience of the New Members' Reception Area where you first met with IPSA staff? Follow ups:
- What do you think was the purpose of the NMRA?
- Was IPSA's role at the NMRA made clear enough?
- What, if anything, could we have done better at the NMRA?
- What aspect of the NMRA did you find most useful?

**Account managers**

*For Returned MPs start here.*

- Do you know you have an IPSA Account Manager? Follow ups:
  - If yes: Are you in regular contact with them?
  - How useful do you find the account manager?

*For Departed (Stood Down and not re-elected) start here.*

- How useful have you found having a designated IPSA Account Manager? Follow ups:
- If no: why do you say that?
- If yes: How much contact did you have with them?
- Are there any improvements we could bring in for the future?
- How confident do you feel/have you felt in closing down your office as a result of the contact with the Account Manager? Probe to uncover anything which was particularly helpful, or which could have been left out.

*For new MPs start here.*

- How useful have you found having a designated IPSA Account Manager? Follow ups:
- Have you, or members of your team, had a 1-1 training session with your AM? How useful was this for you? Was anything particularly useful, or which you think IPSA could have left out?
- Are there any improvements you would like to see IPSA make to the Account Manager arrangements?

## IPSA's communications

### *Questions to be addressed to all respondents*

- Which of IPSA's communications do you use? Probe for frequency of use and specific feedback about most and least used?
  - Website – which areas of the site do you use most?
  - Bulletin
  - Twitter – do you use Twitter in your role, do you follow IPSA?
  - MPs Support Line/telephone
  - Financial Statements
  - Others?
  
- Are there any other ways you would like to receive communications from IPSA?

### *For MPs' staff*

- How responsive is IPSA to your individual needs in the following areas:
  - Online processes
  - Answering the telephone
  - What else?

## Relationship with IPSA

### *Final question about ideas and ambitions for the relationship between MPs and IPSA in the future...*

- How would you describe your relationship with IPSA now in a couple of words? In a perfect world, what should that relationship be? Probe any differences.

## Thanks and close

### *This section concludes the interview and reiterates the main points.*

- I have come to the end of my questions. Is there anything further you'd like to add around your satisfaction and engagement with IPSA?

*Check whether respondent is happy to receive any follow-up queries:*

**ENDS.**

## Appendix B

### Topics for workshops with MPs and their staff

Choosing and running a constituency office – possible contributors might include a solicitor, an MP, a property agent and IPSA team

- Location
- Lease and insurance issues
- Using a solicitor
- Model office contracts
- Utilities
- Security

The MP Support Team – possible contributors might include HoCs HR, an HR expert, IPSA payroll, pensions person

- Recruiting the right people, job descriptions, getting the balance of skills in the team
- Managing and developing your team – performance management basics
- Managing overtime and unsocial hours
- Issues around sexual discrimination, bullying and harassment
- Getting your people security cleared
- Interns and volunteers

The Digital MP – possible contributors might include PDS team, digital team, social media expert

- How to equip your office for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- Managing casework electronically
- IPSA Online and how to integrate your office budgets
- Maintenance contracts for your equipment and what to look out for
- Digital security
- Managing your online and social media presence

Financial management for MPs – possible contributors might include a financial expert/banking

- How your budgets work
- Using your procurement card effectively
- Running a business account
- Basics of financial planning