

# IPSA

## Bulletin: News and Updates from IPSA



16 September 2021

We wish a meaningful day of reflection to those observing Yom Kippur today.

This week marked International Day of Democracy, set up by the United Nations General Assembly to focus on the importance of participation of all members of society for the proper functioning of a democracy. We are committed to supporting you to deliver your important role in UK democracy.

Yesterday we met with the MP Staff User Group to discuss our plans for IPSA Online improvements, the Scheme Review, the casework and return to office surveys and a plan to use videos to provide information. Thanks as always to everyone who came to the session for your guidance and support. If you would like to join the MP Staff User Group, you can register [here](#).

Today we have published details of MPs' business costs for April and May 2021. You can now find the information on the [IPSA website](#).

This week's bulletin contains information on:

- [Publication](#)
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- [Scheme Review Reference Group](#)

Information you should still be aware of includes:

- [Afghanistan: Support for MPs and Staff](#)
- [Clearing your cache](#)
- [Training and Development](#)
- [Contact us](#)

With best wishes

The IPSA Team

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## **Publication**

The latest publication of MPs' business costs, for claims processed between April and May 2021, can now be viewed on the [IPSA website](#). The next publication will be annual publication in November.

If you have any queries, please [contact the MP Services team](#).

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## **Scheme Review Reference Group**

In IPSA's 2021-24 Corporate Plan, we committed to undertake work to simplify our regulatory rules to make it easier for MPs and their staff to comply. We have recently launched a review of the Scheme of MPs' Staffing and Business Costs with the aim set out in our strategy: to deliver a flexible, intuitive, simple scheme responsive to MPs' needs with guardrails for wise spending.

In order to ensure that input from our customers is integral to this review and informs the development of options and proposals for change, we are

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establishing a Scheme Review Reference Group of MPs' staff members. This group would play an advisory role to IPSA throughout the review, providing early engagement and feedback on areas of the Scheme under review; and advising on the impact of proposals for change, prior to formal consultation.

We are looking for up to 10 staff members to join the Reference Group. To the extent possible, we'd like to find volunteers who reflect the diversity amongst MPs' offices, such as different staff roles, political parties, geographical regions and types of constituency.

In order to take part, you would need to be able to attend meetings approximately every two months between October 2021 and the expected end of the review in April 2023, as well as to do some minimal work in between meetings, such as reading and considering project updates. (the frequency of meetings may vary at different points during the review.) You should be willing to actively contribute to discussions using your own experiences, knowledge and insight. You would agree to be courteous to fellow group members and maintain an open mind. As well as telling us about issues and challenges, we'd like the group to help us develop solutions too.

If you are interested in volunteering to join the group, please send a brief statement of interest to [consultation@theipsa.org.uk](mailto:consultation@theipsa.org.uk) by **1 October**. You should tell us about the following (just a couple of sentences for each):

- your motivation for joining the group;
  - how you think you will be able to contribute to the review;
  - if you have experience of taking part in similar activities; and
  - confirmation of your availability to attend meetings approximately every two months for the duration of the project (we will aim to schedule them to suit members' availability).
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## Information you should still be aware of...

### Afghanistan: Support for MPs and Staff

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 MPs 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 and hope the following information is helpful.

#### Sources of support

We would like to remind MPs of the funding that was put in place in 2020 to support the wellbeing of MP staff (details [here](#)).

In addition, the House of Commons provides access to an Employee Assistance Programme which is available to you and your staff which provides support with mental health and wellbeing issues – contact details are available on the parliamentary intranet.

The MP staff Wellness Working Group has done a lot of work to support MP staff, and their wellbeing hub can be found here: [Wellbeing hub for MPs' staff](#).

#### Contingency funding

Our initial understanding is that the impact of the situation in Afghanistan on MP offices is varied but for those offices with the greatest impact, we will consider contingency funding applications. We are conscious that the situation in Afghanistan is on-going and that it might not yet be completely clear what additional budgetary support may be required, so we will be contacting those

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MPs who have been in touch with us to work out how best we can help. Once we have identified the specifics of the support required, we will write to you again.

[Further information can be found here.](#)

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## **Clearing your cache**

**To avoid glitches when using the upgraded system, you must clear your cache the first time you log in to the new system.**

Follow [these instructions on how to clear your cache.](#)

As we have mentioned previously, the upgraded system looks very similar to how it was before but the upgrade will enable us to make improvements to the features and usability over time.

Differences you will notice include:

- the steps for some IPSA Online processes will be different – all the instructions have been updated on the website
- where previously you would select the "dropdown" icon, you should now click into the box and press the space bar – your options will then be displayed in the dropdown menu
- the graphs on the dashboard will look a little different but contain the same information as they did before

If you have any questions, please speak to your [Account Manager](#).

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## **Training and Development**

We currently have a programme of training sessions on a range of subjects.

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These explain our rules, demonstrate processes and answer other questions you may have. Our current programme of sessions includes:

- An introduction to IPSA Online
- Drop-in training for IPSA Online
- Managing your business costs: claims and budgeting
- Managing your properties: The IPSA Property Lifecycle
- Monies Owed Webinar
- Reconciling your Payment Card
- Returned Claims Webinar
- Staffing Budget webinar

[Click here for more details and to register](#)

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## **Contact Us**

**Website:** check the [MP and MPs' staff website](#) for general queries.

**Email:** email [info@theipsa.org.uk](mailto:info@theipsa.org.uk) or [payroll@theipsa.org.uk](mailto:payroll@theipsa.org.uk) with queries for your dedicated Account Manager or Payroll Officer. Your email will be directed to your team and someone will get back to you. Our aim is to get back to you within 5 working days but we'll reply sooner if we can.

**Book a call:** to speak to your dedicated Account Manager or Payroll Officer using the [call booking system](#). They will contact you at the allocated time. You can find information about your IPSA team on our [Contact us](#) page.

**Call the support team:** You can call us directly on **020 7811 6400**. Your call will be answered by a member of the team, not necessarily your Account Manager or Payroll Officer, who will try to resolve your issue or will forward to a member of the team.

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