

Bulletin 25 June 2020

IPSA is committed to supporting MPs and their staff to carry on with their work during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in line with government guidance.

Responses to our recent consultation confirmed details of the huge increase in the workload of MPs' offices, as thousands of distressed people ask for help as a direct result of the coronavirus crisis and the devastating impact this is having on their lives and livelihoods. MPs and their staff are playing a vital role as the country comes out of lockdown and IPSA wants to help you to better support constituents.

This bulletin sets out the additional support we are introducing to help you and your offices respond to constituents' problems. We have laid an [Addendum](#) to the Scheme of MPs' Business Costs and Expenses in the House of Commons which details the changes we have made. The Speaker's Committee for IPSA has approved the additional budget to IPSA, in support of these changes. These changes will come into effect today and build on the measures we introduced in March.

The changes we have made are set out below.

Changes to the Staffing Budget for 2020-21

In order to respond to the rise in constituency office workloads, MPs may request an increase to their staffing budget for 2020-21 up to a maximum amount of £18,270 for London Area MPs and £16,480 for non-London Area MPs. MPs can choose how best to meet the increased demand, whether by hiring a new fixed-term caseworker or other member of staff, by increasing the contracted hours of existing staff members, or by allowing existing staff to carry

out overtime. An MP can make multiple requests during this financial year, to respond to evolving needs, so long as the total amount requested does not exceed the maximum.

Homeworking allowance

We have introduced an allowance of £26 per month for MPs' staff members who are working from home, to cover the additional costs they are incurring as a result of homeworking (for example, additional utilities and telephone costs). This is an alternative to making individual claims for the costs. The homeworking allowance will be administered on an 'opt-out' basis, meaning that all staff members will receive the allowance by default unless their MP notifies us otherwise.

Deadlines for submission of claims and supporting evidence

We recognise that during this period, you may be delayed in submitting claims on IPSA Online, or it may be more difficult to obtain invoices from suppliers and other evidence in order to support claims. Therefore, for any 2020-21 claims, we have extended the normal deadline for submission of claims to 120 days after the cost was incurred. In addition, claims may be submitted without supporting evidence, where that evidence is unavailable as a result of the pandemic. Where we pay claims without supporting evidence, MPs must ensure that the evidence is submitted no later than 120 days after the submission of the claim. If this evidence is not submitted by the deadline, we will ask for the amount to be repaid.

Full guidance on these additional changes can be found [here](#).

Contact us

Whilst our physical office is closed and staff work from home, we remain on

hand to offer the support you require whilst your workloads increase and we approach the year-end deadline. We can be contacted by using the [Call Booking System](#), which you can use to book a call with an Account Manager or Payroll Officer to discuss queries related to the changes, year-end, or any other matters you may have. We are responding to emails quicker and you can continue to contact us either at info@theipsa.org.uk or payroll@theipsa.org.uk.

The dedicated [coronavirus page](#) on our website details all the additional measures we have introduced during the pandemic and includes [FAQs](#) which have been updated with questions you may have about today's changes to the Scheme.

We will continue to update you regularly with any new information with weekly bulletins until the summer recess when we will aim to send them fortnightly.

We hope you, your staff and your families remain well.

With best wishes

Richard Lloyd OBE
Interim Chair, IPSA



Contact Information and Support

We have a range of channels available to provide support to you during the coronavirus outbreak.

There is guidance available on the IPSA [website](#) and [Homepage](#). This

includes a dedicated tab for IPSA
Online guidance.

Queries can be submitted to IPSA teams by emailing the MP Support (info@theipsa.org.uk) or Payroll teams (payroll@theipsa.org.uk).

Our call booking service can be found [here](#).

We also have online training sessions available. These can also be found on the [Learning and Development](#) page on the IPSA Online Homepage.

IPSA ONLINE TRAINING

IPSA Online training takes place every Tuesday and Thursday at 2pm using a virtual platform. [Sign up here](#).

ASK IPSA

An IPSA panel will give a brief overview of their area of responsibility and answer your questions. We can address general questions in this webinar. For specific questions, please book a telephone call with us.

You will meet and have a chance to ask questions from our colleagues in Publication and Validation, MP Support and Payroll.

Monday 6 July at 2pm for one hour. [Sign up here](#).

LEASES

An IPSA Account Manager will talk through the requirements for leases, including submitting forms and, importantly, the required evidence so that your property amendment and property registration forms can be effectively processed. We're keen to help you register properties and change leases as

quickly as we can. There will be an opportunity at the webinar to ask questions at the end.

Monday 29 June at 2pm for one hour. [Sign up here.](#)

Monday 10 August at 11am for one and a half hours. [Sign up here.](#)

Tuesday 8 September at 11am for one and a half hours. [Sign up here.](#)

MANAGING YOUR IPSA BUDGETS

Keeping on top of your financial position with IPSA Online

This bitesize webinar will take you through some key steps in IPSA Online that will help you to:

- confidently comply with the Scheme and follow IPSA's key processes
- use the IPSA Online dashboard and task manager to full effect
- get the most out of reports and forecasting tools

We can address general questions at the end of the webinar. For specific questions, please book a telephone call with us.

Tuesday 7 July at 11am for a maximum of one hour. [Sign up here](#)

PAYMENT CARD RECONCILIATION

With the deadline for payment card reconciliation approaching, an IPSA Account Manager will talk through the payment card policy and how to reconcile your payment card within the rules. There will be an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the webinar.

Tuesday 28 July at 11am for one hour. [Sign up here.](#)

Website Content Feedback

As you will be aware, we are working on improving the online support and guidance for IPSA Online. Thank you to everyone who has given time so far, it has been crucial for the agency to see how you use the system and access current guidance.

The project is now in the second phase with the agency developing ideas for the new guidance site. We are looking for new volunteers for a 45-minute phone call next week to give your feedback on the plans in development. All volunteers are welcome and it's really important that they speak to a diverse group of people. If you could offer your perspective as someone with a protected characteristic, we encourage you to take part.

If you are able to take part next week, please register your interest [here](#).

Please do not post any documents or cheques to our office. If you need to send documents to us, please email them to info@theipsa.org.uk or payroll@theipsa.org.uk as appropriate. We accept scanned documents and forms on IPSA Online.

If you are submitting a New Starter form, please include their parliamentary email address so that we can set up their IPSA Online account with this email.

If you are repaying money to IPSA, please make a BACS payment and email a completed [repayment form](#) to info@theipsa.org.uk. Our bank details can be found on the repayment form.