

## Campaigning guidance for MPs

**IPSA-funded resources must not be used for electoral purposes. This includes staff time, travel, office space and supplies.**

**If you use IPSA-funded resources for campaigning, you must reduce the amount you claim for accordingly or repay if you have already been reimbursed.**

**MPs' staff may only campaign in their own time. If they campaign during their normal working hours, they must take annual leave, unpaid leave or time off in lieu. You cannot require your staff to campaign.**

**Using IPSA-funded resources for campaigning breaches Scheme rules and may also be a breach of electoral law.**

**We are here to help. You can contact us at [info@theipsa.org.uk](mailto:info@theipsa.org.uk) or on 020 7811 6400.**

### Does this campaigning guidance apply to me?

Yes, if you are campaigning during the run up to an election.

You can avoid using your office or equipment for electoral activities, and ensure your staff use paid leave or their own time if they want to campaign.

However, if any of the following apply, you must follow this guidance

- your staff plan to take unpaid leave to campaign, or inadvertently work on campaign activities during their normal working hours;
- you use your IPSA-funded constituency office for campaigning;
- you use your IPSA-funded IT equipment for campaigning; and/or
- you make a claim for something (such as office supplies) which will in whole or in part be used for campaigning.

This is because MPs are not allowed to use any taxpayer-funded business costs and expenses, including staff time, travel, and office equipment for any election campaigning. To do so would be a breach of the Scheme rules and an illegal campaign donation under electoral law. For further information about electoral campaign legislation please go to the Electoral Commission website.

## Staff

If any of your staff wish to undertake any campaigning activities (such as canvassing, writing party political speeches, stuffing envelopes, etc.) they must either:

- take unpaid leave;
- take annual leave;
- take time off in lieu; or
- do it outside of their normal working hours (for example, evenings and weekends).

**If staff are taking unpaid leave, you must tell us in advance (and by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month) by completing the [Unpaid Leave Form](#) on our website.** This will ensure that the proper adjustments can be made to their pay. Please note you only need to contact us if your staff members choose to take unpaid leave: we don't need to know about staff taking annual leave, time off in lieu or who are campaigning outside their normal working hours.

**Given the high levels of external interest in campaign activities, we would strongly encourage you to keep your own records of these arrangements.**

If, after the Election, you realise that your staff members did undertake campaigning activities while on paid IPSA time, you must either:

- arrange for the time to be deducted from their annual leave entitlement; or
- tell us so that we can make adjustments to their pay.

**Please tell us about any adjustments to pay which need to be made after the General Election by completing the [Unpaid Leave Form](#) on our website.**

Where you are unable to tell us before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month about a staff member's plan to take unpaid leave, or you are telling us after the campaigning activity has taken place, we will deduct the appropriate amount from the individual's pay for the following month.

## Office

### *Office supplies*

IPSA-funded office supplies (such as stationery) which have already been claimed for **must not** be used for campaign-related purposes.

If you purchase office supplies which you anticipate will be used both for carrying out your parliamentary functions and for campaign purposes, you must only claim for the proportion which relates to your parliamentary functions. **For reimbursement claims, you can do this in the normal way by reducing the cost claimed by the appropriate amount.**

In line with our usual rules, you should not use your payment card or any of the direct payment options for purchasing office supplies (i.e. Banner, Commercial or XMA) for procuring any item which is to be used wholly or partly for campaign-related purposes.

### *IT equipment*

Similarly, IPSA-funded IT equipment must not be used for campaigning, **unless you have paid the hire fee of £135 to IPSA**. Payment of this fee covers all of the IT equipment you have purchased using IPSA funds for the duration of the dissolution period.

If you choose to pay the hire fee, you can do this by sending us a **cheque or bank transfer, along with a completed [Repayments Form](#)**. Please mark clearly on the form that the payment is for the IT equipment hire fee.

Please note that if you wish to use IT equipment supplied by the Parliamentary Digital Service (PDS) for campaigning, you will need to pay a separate fee to the House of Commons.

### *Office accommodation*

If you use your IPSA-funded constituency office for campaigning purposes (e.g. holding campaign planning meetings), and you claim your office rent on a reimbursement basis, your claims for funding will need to stop for the relevant period or you should claim only for the proportion of time you have used your office to carry out your parliamentary functions. **You can do this by reducing the amount claimed by the appropriate proportion.**

If IPSA pays the rent to your landlord directly, **you will need to repay a relevant proportion of your rent** if you use your office for any campaigning activity. For example, if in a month you use your constituency office for campaigning 25% of the time, you must repay a quarter of the rent for that month. **You can do this by sending us a cheque or bank transfer, along with a completed [Repayments Form](#)**. Please mark clearly on the form that the repayment is for campaigning use of the office.

In line with our standard publication policy, IPSA will publish any repayments made for office rent, and these will be linked to the original claim.

### *Websites*

The House of Commons has issued guidance on what to do with your website and any other online or social media presences during the dissolution period, such as including a disclaimer stating that you are not currently a Member of Parliament. Any website that contains a URL referring to you as an MP (e.g. johnpeekmp.co.uk) should be frozen.

If you are claiming or have claimed for costs relating to your website from IPSA – such as website development or hosting fees – you **must not** use the website for campaigning purposes.

## Travel and Subsistence

You may not claim from IPSA for any travel or subsistence costs (for you or your staff members) that you have incurred on campaigning or election-related work. In accordance with our usual rules, you should not use any travel direct payment option or your payment card to pay for travel for any other purpose than supporting you in your parliamentary functions.

### *Relocating staff based in Westminster to constituencies in the run-up to the Election*

If a Westminster-based staff member is required to carry out parliamentary work in the constituency office, she or he can claim for travel to the constituency and necessary hotel costs. A staff member would only be able to claim for such costs for those nights that directly relate to parliamentary work. Such costs should not be claimed if any of the staff member's activities relate to election campaigning for the MP or party. **If a staff member is campaigning at weekends or taking unpaid or annual leave on some days in order to campaign, the hotel stay for those nights is not claimable.**

You should consider the most appropriate use of taxpayer funds and only claim for unavoidable costs. For example, you should be able to justify the unavoidable need to relocate a staff member to the constituency to conduct necessary work there.

It is your responsibility as an MP and as a candidate to ensure that you do not use any IPSA-funded support for campaigning purposes. You will need to make a judgement on what level of reduction or repayment may be required based on your particular circumstances.

We are happy to provide further advice on the rules and on making claims or repayments. You can contact us at [info@theipsa.org.uk](mailto:info@theipsa.org.uk) or on 020 7811 6400.