

## Campaign activities: further guidance for MPs on claims, repayments for office costs and adjustments to staff pay

### Summary

In October 2014, we circulated to MPs guidance on ensuring that public funds are not used for electoral purposes – see [here](#). The guidance explains that you are not allowed to use any IPSA-funded resources - people, office space, utilities, or office supplies and equipment - for electoral purposes, and that to do so would be illegal. This document outlines the supporting processes to help you to comply with the guidance. It also provides guidance on the relocation of Westminster-based staff to constituencies in the run-up to the Election.

The guidance and supporting processes apply immediately. While they become increasingly likely to be relevant over the next few months, and particularly once Parliament has been dissolved, they cover any campaign-related activity which has already taken place or which takes place in the future.

The detailed processes are set out overleaf but here's a summary of the key points and actions you may need to take:

- Your staff may only campaign in their own time and should take annual leave, unpaid leave or time off in lieu. Given the probable high levels of external interest in campaign activities, we strongly encourage you to keep your own records of these arrangements.
- If your staff are taking unpaid leave you need to tell us before they undertake the campaigning so that we can adjust their pay.
- If you tell us after the campaigning or too late in the month for us to reduce the staff member's pay, we will make the reduction from the following month's salary.
- If you have claimed the cost of any office supplies or equipment from IPSA you must not use them for campaigning.
- If you have not yet claimed for any office supplies or equipment that you intend to use for campaigning you can only claim that proportion of the cost that relates to your parliamentary duties.
- Do not use your Payment Card, Trainline, Chambers or the direct payment options for stationery to purchase anything that will be used for your campaign.
- If you use your office for campaign activities during normal office hours you should reduce the proportion of rent and utilities you claim for the period accordingly.
- If you use your office for campaign activities during normal office hours and we pay your landlord directly, you should send us a cheque to cover the proportion of the cost attributable to campaigning.

## Do the processes in this guidance apply to me?

In order to comply with the guidance circulated in October, you may find it easiest simply to avoid using your office or equipment for electoral activities, and to ensure your staff use paid leave or their own time if they want to campaign. If this is the case, you do not need to contact us.

If however:

- your staff plan to take unpaid leave to campaign, or inadvertently work on campaign activities during their normal working hours;
- you use your offices for campaigning within office hours;
- you make a claim for an item which in whole or in part will be used for campaigning

you will need to take the appropriate action below.

## Making adjustments to staff pay

If any of your staff wish to do any campaigning activities (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.

**If staff are taking unpaid leave, you must tell us in advance (and by the 15th of the month) by sending an email to [payroll@parliamentarystandards.org.uk](mailto:payroll@parliamentarystandards.org.uk), making it clear that the leave is to allow the individual to campaign.** 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. You can tell us at any point about planned unpaid leave arrangements: you do not need to wait until nearer the Election, and a single communication can cover arrangements lasting more than one month. **Given the probable high levels of external interest in campaign activities (including from the NAO and Electoral Commission), 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 sending an email to [payroll@parliamentarystandards.org.uk](mailto:payroll@parliamentarystandards.org.uk) (again making it clear that this was to allow the individual to undertake campaigning activities).

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 costs

### *Office supplies and equipment*

IPSA-funded office supplies or equipment which have already been claimed for must not be used for campaign-related purposes.

If you purchase office supplies or equipment 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 (ie Banner, Commercial or XMA) for procuring any item which is to be used wholly or partly for campaign-related purposes.

### *Office accommodation*

You must not use your IPSA-funded office accommodation (or utilities) during office hours for campaign-related purposes, eg holding campaign planning meetings. Therefore if you do use your office in this way (or for other activity which is not linked to carrying out your parliamentary functions), 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.**

There is a slightly different procedure if you use the IPSA direct payment system to pay for office rent. As we pay the full rent to your landlord directly, you will need to repay a relevant proportion of your rent if you use your office for any political activity. So, if in a month you use 25% of the working hours for election campaigning purposes, you must repay to us a quarter of the rent for that month. **You can do this by sending us a cheque using the [Repayments Form](#).**

We recognise that you may decide to make no claims for office accommodation during the Election period but still use your office to carry out work related to your parliamentary functions.

In line with our standard publication policy, IPSA will publish any repayments made for accommodation, and these will be linked to the original claim. The reasons for repayments are not published.

### **Travel and Subsistence**

As set out in the guidance we circulated in October, you may not claim from IPSA for any travel or subsistence costs that you have incurred on election work. Again, in line with our usual rules, you should not use Trainline, Chambers or your Payment Card to buy IPSA-funded 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**

We have received some enquiries about whether it is possible for staff normally based in Westminster to relocate to constituencies in the run-up to the Election. Our Dissolution Guidance confirms that if a Westminster-based staff member is required to carry out parliamentary work in the constituency office, she or he can claim for necessary hotel costs. A staff member would only be able to claim for such costs for those nights that directly relate to work that is wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred in support of the MP's parliamentary functions. Such costs should not be claimed if the staff member's activities relate to election campaigning for the MP or party, or if they were simply covering other staff members who are on leave to campaign themselves.

When making claims, you should consider the most appropriate use of taxpayer funds and only claim for unavoidable costs. You should be able to explain the unavoidable need to relocate a staff member to the constituency to conduct necessary work there instead. For example, if a staff member is campaigning at weekends or taking unpaid or annual leave on some days, the hotel stay for those nights would not be claimable. We would not normally expect to receive a claim for hotel stays before the Dissolution period starts, unless, for example, this reflects a regular, pre-existing working arrangement or other specific requirement for the staff member to work in the constituency to support you in carrying out your parliamentary functions. The travel rules for staff would still apply (eg not claiming a commute to and from their home).

Hotel costs should be claimed as usual under Travel and Subsistence and will be published.

As above, we anticipate the NAO and Electoral Commission are likely to look closely at working and claiming arrangements in the run-up to the Election, so MPs may wish to keep good records of their staff members' working arrangements, should there be any queries about their expenditure.

### **Further information**

As set out in the guidance, 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.

We cannot advise you on whether individual activities would be allowable within the rules; and where you need to reduce claims or salaries, or to make a repayment to cover use of resources for campaigning purposes, you will need to make a judgment on what level of reduction or repayment is required. We are happy, however, to provide further advice on the rules themselves or on the supporting processes above. You can contact us through the usual MP Support Team at [info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk](mailto:info@parliamentarystandards.org.uk) or on 020 7811 6400.

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**January 2015**