

## EXPENSES

If there's one story that's captured the public's interest this year, it's the furore surrounding MPs' expenses. With everything from duck houses to a box of matches, wasps' nest removal and mortgages on second homes seemingly having been claimed for, MPs are now having to be far more transparent over their claims – and pay back monies that could have been claimed over a significant time period. Most recently it was revealed that those who refuse to repay excessive or incorrect expenses claims could be forced to appear in public before a High Court judge to plead their case.

Of course, some of the most press coverage has been over the more bizarre claims (ice cube trays, mugs from the Tate Modern and cherry trees, for example). But it does raise the question: just what can you claim for from your employer, without falling foul of the tax man?

HM Revenue and Customs says that any expense that can be validly claimed should be “wholly, exclusively and necessary to carry out your duties”. This is – within reason – open to interpretation, and is not necessarily a set list of items, but rather dependent on the individual's role. A good example would be a security company who employs dog handlers: while it might be perfectly valid for these officers to claim pet food or vets' bills for their animals, that doesn't mean the privilege is extended to anyone with pets!

Here is a list of expenses that an employer can pay without generating a tax charge:

### Travel

- You can't claim costs of commuting to and from a regular place of business. But you can claim the cost if it is a temporary place of business, such as a work placement.
- You can claim an amount for using your own vehicle for business purposes. This is 40p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p thereafter.
- You can claim train and plane tickets if accrued on business

### Accommodation

- There are fixed amounts you can claim for overnight stays depending on whether it's in the UK or overseas (£5 UK, £10 abroad)
- You can also claim for “incidental personal expenses” such as