



### **Who are IPSA?**

The Association of Independent Personal Search Agents is a non-profit-making representative body and support group for those individuals and organisations that compile and retail personal property searches on a commercial basis. With over 60 registered firms IPSA is the leading UK trade association for personal search agents and membership includes some of the largest search agencies in the country as well as many independent companies and sole traders.

Because IPSA differentiates between the various elements that make up the whole of the property search industry (i.e. search agencies, water companies, environmental companies, NLIS channels etc.), and concentrates solely on those individuals and organisations involved in carrying out personal searches, it is better able to focus its energies where they are most needed - the representation and support of the personal search agent.

### **How does IPSA represent its members?**

Historically, we introduced the first industry Accreditation Scheme and competency standards as well as setting up the first independent body to oversee those standards (The Compliance and Disciplinary Committee).

Along with other industry organisations, IPSA was chosen to advise the Government on the implementation of the OFT's 2005 Market Study on Property Searches and the inclusion of personal searches in Home Information Packs. This involved being members of various Government Working Groups and advising on such matters as the best method for accessing local authority records, setting guidance for the interaction between personal search agents and Local Authorities and the setting of prices for property searches. The Groups included representatives of Central Government, Local Authorities and the Search Industry.

Between 2007 and 2009 IPSA was instrumental in obtaining key legal advice from leading counsel proving that Local Authorities should provide access to their records free of charge leading to the abolition of the personal search fee in 2010. In order to strengthen its position, IPSA became Founder Members with a seat on the Board of Directors of the PSI Alliance, a pan European body, established by the European Commission, to encourage the public sector to maintain a fair and equitable trading environment, with particular emphasis on the implementation by Local Authorities of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the Re-use of Public Sector Information (PSI) Regulations 2005. This directorship was maintained until 2015. During this time IPSA were also appointed Expert Panel Member to the European Parliament.

For those of you who do not know, the EIR requires Local Authorities to allow inspection of all environmental records free of charge including all personal search information.

More recently, IPSA played a key role in obtaining numerous decisions from the Information Commissioner's office (the individual responsible in the UK for ruling on the correct interpretation of EIR and PSI) against Local Authorities who have consistently refused to implement the EIR by charging for providing the information needed to complete a search report. One council appealed against the ICO's decision and it went to Tribunal.

Having foreseen that this might happen, IPSA was instrumental in the setting up of the 'Legal Fighting Fund' (and had a seat on the Fighting Fund Steering Committee). This was a body of industry stakeholders whose objective was to raise funds and to use those funds to ensure the implementation of the Environmental Information Regulations. As a direct result of the support provided by the Fighting Fund the ICO's decision was upheld.

Following the recent ICO decisions regarding the Local Land Charges Register being a register of environmental information, the Government concluded that for Councils to charge a fee for inspecting the Local Land Charges Register was incompatible with the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and on the 27<sup>th</sup> July 2010 amended the Land Charges Rules 1977 revoking the fee.

We liaise with other industry bodies such as PCCB and CoPSO on matters of compliance and codes of practice and currently have a position on the Board of the PCCB. In 2008, as part of the Review of the National Occupation Standards for Land Charges, IPSA was asked by Asset Skills to write a series of additional elements for the Personal Search Industry. These were published in April 2009 and we currently sit as Expert Panel Members on the Government's Qualification and Curriculum Framework Working Group helping to develop the first 'professional qualification' for the personal search industry.

IPSA has been represented on various other bodies, including the Bank of England Regional Evidence Committee and has spoken at the European Parliament on the subjects of both Environmental Information and the Re-use of Public Sector Information and their effect on the UK Search Industry. We also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the EHome Buying Forum, an organisation established in 2008 to provide a platform for companies who wish to modernise the home buying process.

For those members having difficulties with local authorities who insist on flouting regulations and guidelines, IPSA will advise and assist the search agent. As a direct result of our advice and assistance, several such authorities have revised their personal search policies with a potential saving of thousands of pounds per year for search agencies visiting those councils.

## **What can IPSA do for you?**

In addition to representation at both local and national level, IPSA has set up a range of services designed to educate, inform and support its membership.

The IPSA website includes regular news updates on the latest industry developments, and we have a national list of members willing to complete out of area searches on behalf of other members. For those who find themselves in need of advice and guidance, a telephone helpline is available.

When it comes to insurance, IPSA's insurance partners, BIB/Towergate, can ensure that you are backed by industry leading personal search insurance as well as bespoke PI cover. Personal Search Indemnity Insurance (PSII) is now available to members at a cost of £1.95 per property.

## **Accreditation**

Prior to the introduction of the Home Information Packs Regulations, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Office of Fair Trading made it clear that the search industry needed to introduce a self-regulated compliance regime. They felt that such a regime would ensure that search agents producing searches for inclusion in a HIP were properly trained, with appropriate procedures and insurance protection in place.

That idea was widely accepted by organisations such as the Law Society and the Council of Mortgage Lenders and many lenders and solicitors will now only accept searches from search agents or agencies that are signed up to a recognised scheme. This view has not altered as a result of HIPs being withdrawn - if anything it is stronger than ever. With no legislation in place there will be those in the industry who feel that we can go back to the 'old days' of partial search information covered by insurance. This is not the case. Now more than ever IPSA membership demonstrates that members have professional standards and that IPSA has a robust code in place that both sets those standards and ensures compliance with them.

## **The Search Code**

Introduced in September 2006, the Search Code provides protection for homebuyers, sellers, conveyancers and mortgage lenders who rely on property search reports carried out by personal search agents on residential property within the United Kingdom. It sets out the minimum standards which organisations compiling and/or selling search reports have to meet and is currently the only industry code accepted by the CML.

IPSA fully supports the requirement for members to subscribe to an industry Code. It is therefore a requirement of IPSA membership that applicants are registered with the IPSA approved industry Code.

## **The Property Codes Compliance Board**

How search organisations keep to the Search Code is currently monitored independently by the Property Codes Compliance Board, an independent body set up by CoPSO to monitor private organisations providing property search reports and ensure that they comply with the Search Code. Compliance is monitored via self-certification questionnaires, the submission of documentation, an Annual Statement of Compliance signed by senior executives and compliance visits.

## **The IPSA Accreditation Scheme**

IPSA has long held the belief that it is imperative for the personal search industry to be perceived as 'professional' and like all 'professions' there must be certain standards, in particular standards for competency.

In 2005 IPSA introduced the first industry Accreditation Scheme including setting minimum standards of competency for its members - skill levels that we believe every search agent needs in order to be able to carry out competent searches and produce accurate and reliable reports.

Proof of competence is demonstrated by passing an 'online' exam and the submission of three case histories for assessment. The exam consists of 25 questions designed to test the applicant's knowledge of the personal search process, and the assessments are designed to ensure the correct completion of search reports.

The Scheme is mandatory for all IPSA Members, irrespective of their membership level, and is in addition to any industry Code requirements.

Copies of our Terms and Conditions, membership options and an outline of our accreditation scheme and code of practice are set out on the following pages. Membership fees depend on the size of business and whether or not access to the National List is required and can also be found on the following pages.

If you would like to know more about IPSA and how it can help you, why not contact Heather Poole-Gleed on 01746 762242 or email [heather@ipsa-online.org.uk](mailto:heather@ipsa-online.org.uk).

Alternatively, if you would like to apply for membership, simply complete the application form and standing order form which you can download from the IPSA website and send them to the address shown.

## IPSA Standard Terms and Conditions of Membership 2017

For the purposes of this organisation the term 'Association' means a non-profit-making company, limited by guarantee, set up specifically to ensure that the rights of those individuals and organisations who utilise the services of the personal search industry are protected, and to do this through the representation of members' views at national and local government level, the development and implementation of property search disciplines and the promotion of excellence among its membership and the property search industry as a whole.

1. IPSA is an association for personal search agents, set up to promote and protect the interests of its members and their client base.
2. Only companies or individuals operating as personal search agents or agencies may hold membership.
3. Wherever possible, IPSA will promote and protect the search industry in general but only insofar as any such action does not knowingly lead to the impediment or detriment of its membership or their clientele, either individually or collectively.
4. IPSA operates a regime of self-regulation and accreditation among members and all members agree to fulfil the requirements of the scheme as may from time to time be published.
5. IPSA will promote such a regime to the industry as a whole, with the aim of achieving higher levels of competency and reliability in the production of property search reports.
6. IPSA will provide two types of membership, namely Provisional and Full, and each type will attract differing entry requirements and service provisions. Details of these are at the end of this document. In addition, IPSA will also invite other non-search organisation to take part in the Corporate Partner Scheme. Corporate Partners will have no voting rights.
7. Funds raised through donations and membership fees will be used solely for the purposes of establishing, maintaining, representing and promoting IPSA and its services.
8. An Annual General Meeting will be held each year to agree an action plan for the coming year.
9. Members will agree to abide by the Code of Practice and the Standard Terms and Conditions.
10. Members will not by their actions knowingly bring either the Association in particular, or the industry as a whole, into disrepute. Any member found doing so may have their membership withdrawn.
11. Members will ensure that subscription fees are paid as they fall due. Failure to make payments may result in membership being withdrawn.
12. Where payment is made by Standing Order, standard banking rules governing such transactions apply. Members requiring further details should contact their own bank.
13. Once accepted no member may have that membership withdrawn other than by order of the full executive and then only at the recommendation of the Complaints and Disciplinary Committee.
14. Any member receiving notice that his membership is to be withdrawn has the 'Right of Arbitration' as laid out in the Institute of Arbitrators 'Members Appeal Scheme'.
15. All services provided are at the discretion of IPSA.
16. Members agree to IPSA marketing and negotiating on their behalf, with the proviso that any agreements entered into are purely voluntary and that no action will be taken against any member unwilling or unable to fulfil any agreement made on behalf of the membership by IPSA or its agents.
17. Members agree to their details being entered onto the IPSA circulation list and to receive newsletters and other communications by email.
18. Members agree to their details being passed onto those companies registered under the Corporate Partner Scheme.
19. All information released to IPSA members, whether written or verbal, must be treated as private and confidential unless such information is already in the public domain.
20. All documentation containing the IPSA name or logo is copyright.
21. All information held by IPSA is covered by the Data Protection Act.
22. Each membership is deemed to be an individual contract and governed by English Law.

## MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

IPSA offers two levels of membership: Provisional Member and Member

### PROVISIONAL MEMBER

Anyone applying to become a member of IPSA must first demonstrate that they are able to meet the minimum competency levels that have been set by passing the exam and submitting their case histories. In addition, they must also demonstrate that they hold adequate levels of insurance cover by submitting copies of current, industry acceptable, insurance policies.

In order to give new applicants the time to do this, rather than deny them the benefits that membership provides, IPSA will grant Provisional Membership.

Provisional status is only open to individuals or organisations who, whether in their own right or as a part of a larger organisation (such as a franchise operation), compile and retail Regulated Personal Local Authority Searches as their primary business. Other than in the case of franchisees or satellite offices, Provisional level is designed as a temporary measure to give new applicants the time to complete the full membership entry requirements. Other than Franchisees or satellite offices, Provisional Members will have their membership reviewed after 6 months and, unless they receive an extension from the board, must either become a member or leave after 12 months.

In the case of franchisees or satellite offices, 'Provisional' will be deemed to be a permanent state for as long as the franchisor, or head office holds full membership. In addition, franchisees and satellite offices will be entitled to all member benefits with the exception of voting rights. The reason for this is to ensure that no one company has unfair voting rights over other members (because franchisees and satellite offices are often required to operate a common set of 'rules' and in the event of a member vote the franchisee or satellite office may be required to follow the lead of the franchisor).

- Provisional Members are expected to comply with all aspects of the Accreditation Scheme and ensure that members of staff comply with appropriate elements
- Provisional Members are required to nominate one individual to act as Accreditation Officer
- Provisional Members may become Members at any time on successful completion of the appropriate entry requirements
- Provisional Members may (at the discretion of the board and training partners) receive lower levels of discount for outsourced training or be required to pay part or all of the cost of certain services
- Provisional Members must become registered with the IPSA approved industry Code within the first six months of membership
- Provisional Members have no voting rights

### Minimum requirements:

Payment of the prescribed fee (see current Membership Fees)

Currently compile and retail Regulated Personal Searches as their primary business

Agree to support IPSA and its aims

Agree to abide by the adopted Codes of Practice

Agree to take part in the Accreditation Scheme

- **Pass a Competency Exam:** *please contact IPSA for further information*
- **Provide three Case Histories for assessment:** *these should include the original instruction from your client, any handwritten notes made whilst at the council, and the completed search report*
- **Provide copies of current insurance policies** including Professional Indemnity and Personal Search Insurance

### Provisional Member benefits:

Representation at local and national level

Access to the Helpline

Receive a copy of the newsletter

Access to the members' area of the website

Inclusion in the national list for out-of-area searches (voluntary)

Invitation to the annual Conference

Access to the Arbitration Service

Eligible for discounted training (email [info@searchtrain.co.uk](mailto:info@searchtrain.co.uk)) for further details

## **MEMBER**

Member status is only open to individuals or organisations currently operating as a personal search agency, whether in their own right or as a part of a larger organisation (such as a franchise operation) and who have successfully completed all entry requirements.

- Members are expected to comply with all aspects of the Accreditation Scheme and ensure that appropriate members of staff comply with required elements of the Unit Achievement Scheme
- Members are required to nominate one individual to act as Accreditation Officer
- Members must be registered with the IPSA approved industry Code
- Members are entitled to full discount (where offered) for outsourced training and other services that may from time to time be offered
- Members are entitled to one vote per member on policy matters

### **Minimum requirements:**

Payment of the prescribed fee (see current Membership Fees)

Agree to support IPSA and its aims

Agree to abide by the adopted codes of practice

Must be registered with an IPSA approved industry Code as a Compiler and Retailer of Personal Searches and be prepared to provide evidence of this upon request

Agree to take part in the Accreditation Scheme

### **Member benefits:**

Representation at local and national level

Receive regular updates

Access to the website

Invitation to the Annual Conference

Invitation to members meetings

Voting rights

Access to the Helpline

Kept up to date on industry changes

Access to the Arbitration Service

Eligible for discounted training

**Logos:** All members, irrespective of membership category, will receive the member's logo to display on company documentation, and on successful completion of the Accreditation process will be entitled to display the Accredited Members logo.

# THE IPSA ACCREDITATION SCHEME

## Explanatory document

### Introduction

To most search agents an Accreditation Scheme is the last thing they need. The downsides are obvious - a series of unnecessary and unwanted obstacles in what are already uncertain times. Added to this the size of the industry, its fragmentary structure, and the various methods of entry, have all worked against the introduction of any form of regulation or compliance and between the two we have an industry populated by search agents with varying degrees of competence and almost no regulation.

IPSA has always believed that the implementation of formal training programmes, a recognised system of accreditation and a definitive and transparent complaints system are vital, not only for the protection of the consumer, but for the future of the industry itself. A properly structured scheme not only ensures that members have the appropriate skills to carry out their role as search agents, but also that they have necessary systems and procedures in place to support those skills and ensure that the business is operated on a 'sound' basis. Additionally, the very process of working towards accredited status often promotes a climate of internal review that in itself leads to a better understanding of operational responsibilities and, almost as a by-product, greater quality control.

IPSA has developed a unitised system of accreditation, designed not only to ensure that consumers receive a level of service and protection that they have every right to expect, but also one that is realistic in terms of implementation, irrespective of company structure.

The unitised approach also addresses the need for flexible competency testing. Because the spectrum of IPSA membership, and the search industry as a whole, includes not only the self-employed and sole trader companies, but also employees who are only involved in limited roles, the Scheme must be able to adapt itself to the requirements of the individuals who are taking part.

For example, whilst a company would be expected to demonstrate that it complied with all the elements of the Accreditation Scheme, a search agent who is employed solely to carry out searches, but who plays no part in the day to day running of the business, could not be expected to have an understanding of those operating procedures unrelated to their particular job. Consequently, it would be unfair to expect such individuals to comply with elements relating to operational management or procedures. They would however need to demonstrate that they have the necessary skills and knowledge required for the successful inspection, identification and recording of information relevant to carrying out a personal search.

The Scheme was introduced and implemented with the organisation's inception in February 2005. Originally comprising Code of Practice, Terms and Conditions, proof of insurance and competency testing, it now includes a range of additional elements designed not only to measure members' and their employees' competence and fitness for purpose, but also to ensure that as an organisation, IPSA is providing the support services necessary to assist members in achieving and maintaining accredited status.

The Scheme incorporates four Elements:

1. Compliance
2. Competence Testing
3. Training and CPD
4. Complaints Procedure

Each element has been designed to ensure that every Member, or Provisional Member, operates good business practice and that appropriate individuals within the Member's or Provisional Member's business, have the skills necessary for their respective roles.

This means that the Scheme has to operate on two levels;

- 1) Applicants, whether individuals or firms, are by definition businesses and IPSA must be satisfied that the business has those systems and procedures in place that will ensure an accurate and consistent service. It does this through a series of checks and tests that require each applicant to submit a portfolio of evidence as proof of their compliance.
- 2) Members and Provisional Members are made up of individuals and IPSA must also ensure that appropriate individuals are competent in the skills necessary to carry out their day-to-day responsibilities.

In addition to testing the overall competency of the business therefore, the Scheme also provides a mechanism for testing the level of competence of relevant skills for appropriate individuals. This is known as the Unit Achievement Scheme.

## The Elements

### Element 1: Compliance

IPSA has put in place a set of rules and procedures to ensure that members meet certain minimum standards. These are set out in the current Code of Practice, Terms and Conditions and Unit Achievement Scheme documents which can be downloaded from the website at [www.ipsa-online.org.uk](http://www.ipsa-online.org.uk)

On applying to join IPSA applicants are required to:

- Sign an Agreement that they will adhere to the requirements of the current Code of Practice and Terms and Conditions. It is important that applicants read and understand the Code and Terms as they set out the commitment required from members. The agreement forms part of the application form.
- Provide evidence that they are registered with the IPSA approved industry Code.

Once accepted as a - Provisional Member, applicants are required to:

- Submit 3 personal search case histories including original instruction, working papers and final report.
- Provide a copy of current insurance certificates.
- Pass the competency test.

### Element 2: Competence Testing

Members must demonstrate their understanding of the search process and show that they are capable of interpreting source data in order to produce reports that are accurate and reliable. All members, together with any employees involved in carrying out personal searches, are required to sit a competency examination.

The examination is currently free of charge for members and is completed online. It consists of 25 questions taken at random from a bank of over 200. The questions include contributions from experienced search agents, solicitors and local authority staff and have been designed to test the agent's knowledge of the search process, the LLC1 and CON29 documents and their understanding of, and ability to interpret, the information contained in public records.

**Recognition:** At present there is no 'official' method of recognition or qualification for the search industry. IPSA has resolved the matter internally with the introduction of the Certificate in Search Practice and the Accredited Member Certificate and Logo.

- **Certificate in Search Practice:** This is an internal qualification awarded to those individuals who have satisfied all elements of the Unit Achievement Scheme. To date 26 search agents have been awarded the certificate.
- **Accredited Member Status:** Members and Provisional Members completing all aspects of the Accreditation Scheme are allowed to display the Accredited Member Logo as opposed to the Member Logo and will receive an Accredited Member Certificate. To date 12 companies have achieved Accredited Member status.
- **Unit Achievement Scheme:** This is a scheme that 'lifts' individual 'units of competence' from within the Accreditation Scheme such as the 'examination' element and applies them on an individual rather organisational basis. A record is kept of the satisfactory completion of each unit and once all the units have been completed the individual is awarded the Certificate in Search Practice.

In this way IPSA is able to offer a qualification process that not only addresses the need to demonstrate specific knowledge and competence on several levels, but at the same time provides a mechanism for charting individual progress. Equally it does not restrict appropriate individuals from going on to achieve the Certificate in Search Practice as it provides automatic Credit Tariff for each unit completed.

**Element 3: Training and Continual Personal Development**

In order to ensure that members are able to achieve, and continue to maintain, the required standards, IPSA provides a number of CPD opportunities including discounted training.

It is envisaged that individuals requiring training will fall into four categories:

- New entrants to the industry
- Members with between 6 and 24 months practical experience
- Those who fail the competency examination
- Members attending CPD workshops

Individuals who fail the competency examination are recommended to seek appropriate training – contact IPSA for further details.

**Element 4: Complaints Procedure**

IPSA requires all members to have in place a robust and transparent complaints handling procedure. Members who do not have an acceptable scheme in place are required to adopt the IPSA Complaints Procedure.

The IPSA Complaints process is operated by the Complaints and Disciplinary Committee, an independent body consisting of a chartered surveyor, a conveyancing solicitor and chaired by a retired police officer who is one of the country's leading experts on financial fraud and money laundering.

In addition to investigating consumer complaints the CDC is also responsible for internal disciplinary matters. Incorporating both independent investigation and a range of disciplinary options, the CDC provides a robust and transparent system for dealing with complaints and discipline among members.



## Code of Practice

### Introduction

A Code of Practice is essential to any professional body for two reasons:

1. It ensures that members have a clear understanding of the principles that they are supporting and the commitments they will have to make in order to uphold those principles
2. It allows potential clients to view in advance the 'rules' under which members operate and thereby determine whether their interests are adequately protected

The Association of Independent Personal Search Agents  
operates under a single guiding principle:

***'that the rights of those individuals and organisations who use the services of the search industry are paramount'***

By striving to uphold this principle, IPSA seeks not only to ensure the protection of the clients' interests but, the future of the personal search industry as well.

The IPSA Code of Practice, based on this principle and to which all members must commit, exceeds many of the standards and commitments already set out by other search industry organisations such as the Council of Property Search Organisations. In addition, however, IPSA is committed to continually seeking ways in which to enhance those standards for the betterment of the industry and its clientele.

### The Standards

1. That members will at all times protect the rights of those individuals and organisations who use their services
2. That members or their employees have the training, qualifications, and experience necessary to carry out searches in a professional manner and produce reliable reports that are both accurate and meaningful
3. That members hold insurance cover sufficient to ensure the protection of their clientele and which complies with current Government and Association guidelines
4. That members continually strive to improve their knowledge of the industry and the procedures that they operate in order to ensure that the services they provide are to the highest standard
5. That members act with integrity and in a manner befitting their position
6. That members operate a policy of equality of opportunity
7. That members be at all times mindful of the health and safety of themselves and others
8. That members ensure the security of information obtained and any subsequent documentation produced
9. In order to uphold these standards IPSA members must make the following commitments:

## The Commitments

IPSA members will:

- Ensure that they and their staff are adequately trained and qualified to undertake property searches and accordingly within six months of joining all members (including members of staff who carry out personal searches) will have been accredited with the IPSA Certificate in Search Practice.
- Ensure that the information contained in search reports is easily understandable, gives a clear and concise reporting of the information obtained, and complies with all Government and Association requirements.
- Take all necessary steps to ensure that wherever possible the information contained in a search report is a true and accurate copy of the information extracted from public or other records.
- Take every care to ensure that where it is necessary to interpret records, that interpretation accurately reflects the nature, spirit and meaning of the original record.
- Clearly indicate on the search report if information is not available for public inspection and wherever possible indicate where and how that information may be obtained.
- Ensure that appropriate procedures are in place to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of information obtained whilst carrying out a search.
- Deal promptly with any queries raised regarding the information revealed in search reports.
- Handle complaints quickly and fairly in accordance with the procedures set out in the accreditation scheme or equivalent.
- Maintain professional indemnity and other insurance protection appropriate for their core business and in keeping with prevailing government and association guidelines.
- Apply the Code in respect of all searches carried out including re-seller arrangements.
- Agree to abide by industry-accepted standards or governmental requirements.
- Agree to abide by the requirements of Competition Law.
- Treat local authority staff with respect and refrain from abusive language or actions irrespective of the circumstances.
- Affirm their commitment not to discriminate, either positively or negatively, directly or indirectly, against any members of staff, other members or prospective members of the Association and any individual or organisation they come into contact with.
- Take all necessary steps to ensure the health and safety of themselves and others and to actively promote a policy of health and safety within their organisation.
- Act in a reasonable and professional manner and not cause the name of the Association to be brought into disrepute.

## Insurance

Current IPSA and IPSA approved industry Code requirements are that each search company or sole trader will maintain adequate insurance protection as follows:

### Professional indemnity insurance

Members will maintain professional indemnity insurance appropriate for the protection of their client base and which complies with prevailing government and industry guidelines. At present there are no government guidelines but the figure recognised by the industry is currently set at a minimum of £2M per search.

For searches where the client or their advisors have indicated that the value of the property is in excess of this figure, the member should make individual arrangements with their insurers to the satisfaction of the client or their advisors. In addition, members should have appropriate runoff cover facilities in place.

## **Information: Sources, Records, Storage Access and Security**

IPSA members will:

- Ensure that sources used in compiling search results are legitimate.
- Only obtain information by either personally examining public records, corresponding with a council official entitled to provide such information, extracting information from their own or commercially available data sources, or by instructing a suitably qualified third party to obtain the information on their behalf.
- Only use information that has been legitimately obtained either commercially or from the public domain.
- Retain a record of all reports produced in a safe and proper environment for a period of not less than of 6 years.
- Have appropriate procedures in place to ensure that only appropriate individuals can gain access to the information and documents collated and prepared during a search and furthermore to ensure that such individuals are aware of their responsibilities in maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of such information.
- Allow IPSA or its agents, including approved IPSA industry Code appointed representatives access to any records necessary for the satisfactory investigation and conclusion of complaints.

## **Complaints**

IPSA members will deal with all complaints speedily and fairly. Complaints will be handled in the following manner:

- Wherever practicable, the complaint will be investigated by a person or persons not involved with the action that led to the complaint.
- In the case of sole trader members and where the complainant is not prepared to deal with the search agent directly, IPSA will nominate a third party member to act as intermediary.
- Complaints should be satisfied within one month from the date of receipt.
- Where there are valid reasons why the complaint cannot be satisfied within this timescale the complainant will be kept informed either in writing or by telephone.
- Final decisions will be notified in writing.
- Members will co-operate fully with IPSA whilst investigations are underway and will abide by any findings.

## **Compliance with the Code of Practice**

IPSA members will be required to sign a statement of confirmation that they have the necessary arrangements in place to ensure full compliance with the Code of Practice and to re-affirm their commitment on an annual basis. Members who fail to comply with the Code may be expelled from the Association.

## **Amendments and alterations**

IPSA will, from time to time issue memos amending or altering the Code. Such alterations or amendments will take immediate effect unless otherwise stated and should be treated as being part of the current Code.

## **Effective and Review Dates**

This Code first came into operation on 1 April 2006 and will be reviewed on an annual basis in order to ensure that members continue to fulfil the requirements of central and local government, the Association and their client base.

In the event of any queries relating to either the Code of Practice or the Accreditation Scheme please contact:

**heather@ipsa-online.org.uk**

### Current Membership Fees – 2017

	<b>1-3 Full Time Equivalent Staff</b>	<b>4-9 Full Time Equivalent Staff</b>	<b>10+ Full Time Equivalent Staff</b>
<b>Access to National List</b>	£50.00/month £600.00/year	£62.50/month £750.00/year	£80.00/month £960.00/year
<b>No Access to National List</b>	£30.00/month £360.00/year	£42.50/month £510.00/year	£60.00/month £720.00/year