

Introduction for non-party campaigners

This document is for people who are thinking of campaigning at elections but are not standing as a political party or candidate.

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Terms and expressions we use

We use '**must**' when we refer to a specific legal or regulatory requirement. We use '**should**' for items we consider to be minimum good practice, but which are not legal requirements.

You do not have to follow this guidance, but if you do, you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law.

Our approach to enforcement

If you do not comply with legal or regulatory requirements you or your organisation may be subject to civil or criminal sanctions. You can find more information about the Commission's approach to enforcement at www.electoralcommission.org.uk/party-finance/enforcement.

Introduction for non-party campaigners

Who this document is for:

People who are thinking of campaigning in the run-up to an election but are not standing as a political party or candidate.

The document covers:

- An introduction for non-party campaigners
- Who regulates campaigns
- When campaigns are regulated
- When you need to register as a 'recognised third party'

Related documents:

- [Overview of non-party campaigns](#)
- [Overview of non-party campaign material](#)
- [Managing non-party campaign spending](#)
- [Situations and procedures: Hustings events](#)

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Summary

Political parties and campaigners are vital to a healthy democracy and we encourage active participation by campaigners.

This introduction will give you the key points about the rules on non-party campaigning and tell you where you can find more information.

Introduction

Non-party campaigners are individuals or organisations that campaign in elections, but are not standing as political parties or candidates. In electoral law, we also call these individuals or organisations ‘third parties’.

You may want to campaign on particular issues, or for or against particular parties or candidates.

There are separate rules for campaigning at referendums.

For more information see our guidance page for [campaigners in referendums](#).

The types of non-party campaigns

There are two types of non-party campaigns.

These are:

- **Local campaigns** – non-party campaigns for or against one or more candidates in a constituency, ward or other electoral area.
- **General campaigns** – non-party campaigns for or against a political party, policy, issue or a particular type of candidate.

Different rules apply to these two types of non-party campaigns.

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Who regulates campaigns?

Local campaigns

Campaigning for or against one or more candidates in a particular ward or constituency is covered by the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA) or equivalent legislation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We do not regulate local campaigns, or the rules that apply to them. Any complaints about breaches of the rules should be made to the police.

General campaigns

General campaigns are regulated by us, The Electoral Commission.

If you are campaigning for or against political parties, policies, issues or types of candidates you may need to register with us and follow the rules on campaign spending, donations and reporting.

For more information on the rules for both types of campaigning, see this document:

- [Overview of non-party campaigns](#)

When are general campaigns regulated?

Campaigns are regulated in the run-up to elections to:

- the European Parliament
- the UK Parliament
- the Scottish Parliament
- the National Assembly for Wales
- the Northern Ireland Assembly

For each election there is a 'regulated period' for which the rules on spending and donations apply.

We publish election-specific guidance each year that explains when the regulated period starts and how much you can spend.

Spending at local authority elections is only covered by general campaign spending rules if the election falls within the regulated period of one of the elections listed on the left.

When do you need to register as a 'recognised third party'?

If you are running a 'general' campaign and you spend or plan to spend more than £10,000 in England or £5,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland on election material, you will need to register with us as a 'recognised third party'.

As a 'recognised third party', you must comply with the legal controls on spending and donations.

For more information see this document:

- [Overview of non-party campaigns](#)

Who can register as a 'recognised third party'?

Only the following types of individuals or organisations can register and become a 'recognised third party':

- An individual registered on a UK electoral register or resident in the UK.
- A UK-registered political party.
- A UK-registered company which is incorporated in the EU and carries on business in the UK.
- A UK-registered trade union.
- A UK-registered building society.
- A UK-registered limited liability partnership which carries on business in the UK.
- A UK-registered friendly, industrial, provident or building society.
- A UK-based unincorporated association that carries on the majority of its business or other activities in the UK.

You can register with us using the [TP1 form](#) on our website.

If you cannot register, you cannot spend more than £10,000 in England or £5,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland on a general campaign.



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How we can help

You can find more information in the guidance documents we have suggested in this document, or you can view our full range of guidance and up-to-date resources on our website.

If it's easier, you can also contact us on one of the phone numbers or email addresses below. We are here to help, so please get in touch.

Call us on:

- **England:** 020 7271 0616
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Scotland:** 0131 225 0200
infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Wales:** 029 2034 6800
infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Northern Ireland:** 0289 089 4020
infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Visit us at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

We welcome feedback on our guidance – just email us at:
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

Translations and other formats

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Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk