

## Sponsorship

Sponsorship is support given to a political party, or other regulated organisation or individual, that helps them meet the costs of:

- any conference or event
- the preparation, production, or distribution of a publication, or
- any study or research

Where a payment does not amount to sponsorship, it may still be a donation (see [Overview of donations to political parties](#)).

The sponsorship rules apply to:

- Political parties
- Non party campaigners
- Registered referendum campaigners
- Party members and holders of elected office
- Members associations
- Candidates at elections

## What do the rules mean?

Sponsorship payments over £500 (£50 for candidates) can only be accepted from a permissible donor (see [Managing donations to political parties](#)).

Sponsorship must be reported if the amount you accept from one source exceeds:

- £7,500 for political parties
- £1,500 for party accounting units
- £7,500 for non party campaigners, registered referendum campaigners, and members associations
- £1,500 for party members and holders of elected office, and
- £50 in the case of candidates

## Are there any exemptions?

Yes:

- Admission charges for conferences or other events
- The purchase price of publications, and
- Commercial rate payments for adverts in publications
- Some payments for conference stands – see below.

## Is all advertising exempt?

No. The exemption only applies to adverts in publications.

Payments for any other type of advertising, such as banners at an event, should be treated as sponsorship if they help meet the cost of the event.

In our view, advertising payments that do not help to meet the costs of an event or publication do not count as sponsorship.

However, if someone pays more than the commercial value of an advert, the difference between what they pay and the commercial value will be a donation.

## Other payments relating to conferences

### Conference stands

Payments of up to £15,000 (excluding VAT) for a 3m x 3m stand do not need to be treated as

sponsorship or any other type of donation.

A higher pro rata amount can be charged for larger stands but it is not necessary to pro rata a lower amount for smaller stands.

Anything over £15,000 (excluding VAT) should be treated as sponsorship if it helps meet the cost of the event, and as a donation to the party if not.

### Support for meetings, receptions and dinners

If an event is hosted by or on behalf of a party (or party accounting unit), or another regulated organisation or individual, support to help meet the costs of the event should be treated as sponsorship.

For payments for a place or table at a dinner organised by a party or other regulated organisation or individual, the difference between the value of the dinner and the amount paid is a donation rather than sponsorship.

### Conference packages

Some parties, and other regulated organisations, may offer overall discounts when a combined package of items relating to an event are purchased together, for example a conference stand, a number of admission passes, and a number of seats at a dinner.

If you offer a conference package, you will need to consider each part of the package to assess whether it is reportable.

Some elements may be exempt, such as an admission charge, whilst others elements of the package, such as non-exempt types of advertising, will be treated as sponsorship if they help to meet the costs of the event.

## Valuing sponsorship

When calculating the value of sponsorship, the full amount of the payment received should be taken into account and reported if over the thresholds above.

No deduction for any commercial value, or any benefit to the sponsor etc, should be made.

## Treatment of VAT

Where a sponsorship payment includes VAT, the question of whether the VAT element should be reported as part of the sponsorship will depend on the facts – for instance, if the party would have been liable for the VAT if it had not been paid, then its payment is a benefit to the party and should be reported as sponsorship.

## Sponsorship by companies

Where a company makes a payment that is treated as sponsorship, it is a donation under electoral law.

Companies will therefore need to ensure that they have complied with any applicable controls on making a political donation.

## How can we help?

We are here to help, so please get in touch. You can call us on the phone numbers below or email us.

Call us on:

- England: 020 7271 0616
- Scotland: 0131 225 0200
- Wales: 029 2034 6800
- Northern Ireland: 028 9089 4020

Email us at:

[pef@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:pef@electoralcommission.org.uk)

Visit us at

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

## Translations and other formats

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