
Factsheet: Crowdfunding: donations and permissibility

Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA), there are rules on what donations registered political parties and registered non-party campaigners can accept. Certain donations must be recorded and reported to us. We publish these reports on our website.

Under the Representation of the People Act 1983, there are rules on what donations candidates can accept. Certain donations must be recorded and reported to the Returning Officer after an election.

Our guidance explains the rules on how donations must be checked before they are accepted, and reported to us. There are separate sets of guidance for candidates, political

parties and non-party campaigners. You should read the guidance before you read this factsheet.

This factsheet explains how to apply the rules on donations and permissibility to crowdfunding activities.

It also lets you know where you can find further information and advice on these rules.

Donations

There are rules that cover when candidates, political parties and non-party campaigners can accept donations.

Donations over certain amounts can only be accepted from permissible sources. These amounts are different for candidates, political parties and non-party campaigners.

The rules around checking and accepting donations apply to:

- political parties all of the time
- candidates during the regulated period for an electoral event
- non-party campaigners in relation to their spending on regulated campaign activity during the regulated period for an electoral event

Our guidance explains the regulated periods for each electoral event.

What is crowdfunding

Crowdfunding is the use of a web based platform to collect donations. The platform is generally managed by a third party provider and each individual fundraising campaign has a page on the site. Campaigns usually run for a set period of time. At the end of that time, the funds raised, minus a fee paid to the provider, are passed to the donee.

Crowdfunding

Transparency

You should ensure that it is clear on the crowdfunding web page who the money is being donated to: to a candidate, to a political party or to a non-party campaigner. This is because there are different recording and reporting thresholds for each entity.

You, as a candidate, non-party campaigner or a political party should ensure that the webpage contains information that explains that permissibility checks will be undertaken in compliance with the rules and that information about donations, including donor details may be published.

We publish information about donations over a certain amount made to political parties and non-party campaigners based on reports they provide to us. Returning Officers make returns prepared by candidates available for inspection after elections. These include details of donations.

There are special rules around the release of information about the identity of donors in Northern Ireland.

Crowdfunding pages should make donors aware of these rules and the possibility that their name will appear publicly as a donor.

Permissibility

You must only accept donations from a permissible source.

A donation is money, goods, property, or services over a certain value. This value is:

- **£50** for candidates, and
- **£500** for political parties and non-party campaigners

Money donated via a crowdfunding webpage that is less than these amounts is not a donation and you do not need to report them unless there are multiple donations from the same source that add up to these sums. If this occurs this may be treated as one donation. You should ensure that you have sufficient information from the crowdfunding provider and maintained your records in a way that enables you to ascertain if multiple donations have come from the same source.

Candidates, parties and non-party campaigners can only accept donations from permissible, mainly UK sources. Our guidance explains who you can accept donations from.

You **must** collect sufficient information from every donor to ensure that you can properly check that each donation is from a permissible source.

You should be clear on the webpage that this is the reason you are collecting any information.

If you are uncertain who the actual donor is you **must** not accept the donation. You cannot accept anonymous donations.

You must also collect sufficient information to comply with reporting requirements.

Date of receipt

When you receive a donation, you have 30 days to carry out permissibility checks and decide if you can accept the donation. The date of receipt by the candidate, party or non-party campaigner is the date they receive the funds from the crowdfunding site. This is the date from which the 30 day period for checking permissibility starts.

If the donation is not from a permissible source, you must return it within the 30 day period. If you don't, you will be deemed to have accepted it. If you accept an impermissible donation, you may have to forfeit it. You may also have committed a criminal offence.

What must you record and report

Political parties, registered non-party campaigners and candidates must all follow certain reporting requirements. These requirements are set out in our guidance.

Parties and non-party campaigners must report donations (which are by themselves or when added to other donations, accepted from the same donor) over £7,500. The threshold for accounting units of political parties is £1,500. Candidates must report donations over £50 during the regulated period.

If you accept a donation which is over the relevant recording threshold you will need to record these details:

- the donor's name and address
- the amount of the donation
- the date on which the donation was received
- the date on which the donation was accepted

You must record the donor's address as it is shown on the relevant statutory register.

For more information on which registers you need to check, please see our guidance.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you collect sufficient information to properly complete your reporting obligations including your obligations as to how donations from impermissible donors have been dealt with.

Imprints

As good practice, we recommend that you should put an imprint on electronic material, such as websites and emails. This includes webpages used for crowdfunding. The imprint should include the name and address of the promoter and the organisation on whose behalf it has been produced. You should include an imprint unless the size or format of the election material would mean that the imprint is not legible.

Where it is impractical to place the full imprint on the election material you should consider how to provide some other means for the material to be associated with you.

Cryptocurrencies

Cryptocurrencies are digital currencies that operate independently of any central bank or authority.

The same rules apply to donations received in cryptocurrencies as any other donations. Sufficient information must be collected to check permissibility. You have 30 days from the date of receipt to check permissibility. There must be a means of valuing the donation given in any cryptocurrency.

Example

A non-party campaigner decides to raise money for spending on a regulated campaign activity via a crowdfunding website.

They enter into an agreement with the crowdfunding website that sets a time limit of 5 January and a target of £20,000.

They then produce the webpage including:

- a proper imprint
- details about permissibility checks that will be undertaken and when they will be undertaken (i.e. donations over £500)
- advice that anonymous donations over £500 cannot be accepted
- advice that multiple donations from the same source will be aggregated for recording and reporting purposes
- information that donor details will appear in the election return and if

a donor donates over a certain amount the identity of the donor will appear on the Electoral Commission website

The non-party campaigner has selected a crowdfunding website that collects enough information from donors to ensure they can complete their recording and reporting obligations.

Upon achieving the target amount, the non-party campaigner receives the funds on 5 January as well as details of the donations given from the crowdfunding provider. The donations include:

- a donation of £550 received by the crowdfunding webpage on 17 December
- a donation of £7,520 received by the crowdfunding webpage on 10 December
- 3 donations of £2,510 from the same source received by the crowdfunding webpage on 10 December, 17 December and 3 January
- several other donations from identifiable sources between £500 and £1,000 received by the crowdfunding webpage over the target period

The non-party campaigner should commence permissibility checks on 5 January because this is the date of receipt.

The donation of £550 is from an anonymous source. The non-party campaigner returns the donation to the financial institution it was received from originally before the

end of the 30 day period for checking permissibility

The campaigner accepts the donation of £7,520 after a permissibility check is undertaken. The donor is aware from the information provided on the webpage that their name will be published on the Electoral Commission website.

The campaigner aggregates and accepts the three donations of £2,510 from the same source after they undertake the permissibility checks. The donor is aware from the information provided on the webpage that their name will be published on the Electoral Commission website.

The campaigner accepts the donations of between £500 and £1,000 after they undertake the permissibility checks.

The campaigner reports the donations between £500 and £1,000 as an aggregated sum to the Electoral Commission. The campaigner reports the single donation of £7,520 and the three aggregated donations of £2,510, totalling £7,530. Details of these donations are later published on the Electoral Commission website.

Where you can find more information

We publish guidance and resources for both candidates, parties and non-party campaigners which you can find on our [website](#).

We also offer an advice service. If you have any questions about your spending or donations, you can

contact us on the phone numbers or one of the email addresses below.

Contact us

Our telephone number has changed. You can now contact us on 0333 103 1928. When you call this number you will be given a number of options that will direct you through to the party and election finance advice line or your national office. Our old number will continue to work.

Our email address has not changed and you can contact us pef@electoralcommission.org.uk as normal.

Alternatively use the email addresses below.

- England:
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Scotland:
infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Wales:
infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Northern Ireland:
infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk