UK Parliamentary general election: Targeted spending in support of a political party

Under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) a registered political party may authorise registered non-party campaigners to spend on certain campaigning activities in support of the political party or its candidates. In addition to the general spending limits on campaign spending by non-party campaigners, there are limits on how much a non-party campaigner can spend on regulated campaign activity with the intention of supporting just one political party or its candidates. The limits will depend on whether the political party has authorised the non-party campaigner to incur the spending. This factsheet explains the rules on targeted spending that apply to political parties in the run up to a UK Parliamentary general election.

What are non-party campaigners?
Non-party campaigners are individuals or organisations that campaign in the run-up to elections, but are not standing as political parties or candidates.

For more information, please see our guidance for non-party campaigners here.

What is ‘targeted spending’?
Targeted spending is spending, in the run-up to a UK Parliamentary general election, on regulated campaign activity, that can reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for one particular political party or any of its candidates.
To count as targeted spending, the non-party campaigner’s spending must reasonably be regarded as intending to influence voters to vote for only one political party or any of its candidates (and not intended to influence voters to vote for any other party or any of its candidates).

In almost all cases, a non-party campaigner’s spending will count as targeted spending if they name a political party or its candidates in a way that can be reasonably regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for one particular political party or any of its candidates.

Targeted spending and notional spending

The targeted spending rules only apply to money, goods, property and services that a non-party campaigner uses as part of its campaign.

The targeted spending rules do not apply in respect of any donations a non-party campaigner makes to a political party.

A donation is money, goods, property or services which are given:

- towards the political party’s campaign spending, and
- without charge or on non-commercial terms, and
- has a value of over £500.

Under PPERA, anything with a value of £500 or less is not a donation.

A political party will however have to account for items provided in this way as ‘notional spending’. And if an item given free of charge or at a non-commercial discount has a value of more than £500, the political party may also have to account for it as a donation to the party.

When do the rules on targeted spending apply?

The rules on targeted spending only apply:

- to registered non-party campaigners, and
- during regulated periods that involve a UK Parliamentary general election.

In the run up to certain elections, there is a set time when the rules on spending and donations apply. We call this time the ‘regulated period’.

UK Parliamentary general elections usually have a regulated period of 365 days, ending on the day of the election.

We will publish guidance before each election so political parties are clear when the targeted spending rules apply.

What are the limits on targeted spending?

There are limits on how much non-party campaigners can spend on targeted spending. The limits depends on whether or not a political party has authorised the non-party campaigner to incur the targeted spending.

Limits when a political party authorises targeted spending

If a political party authorises a non-party campaigner to incur an amount of targeted campaign spending, the non-party campaigner may spend up to the limit authorised by that political party.
However, the non-party campaigner must not exceed the national and constituency spending limits even if a political party authorises the non-party campaigner to spend more than these limits.

**Limits when a political party does not authorise targeted spending**

If a political party does not authorise a non-party campaigner to incur an amount of targeted campaign spending, the non-party campaigner may only spend up to the following amounts (“the targeted spending limits”) during the regulated period for the UK Parliamentary general election:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of UK</th>
<th>Limits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>£31,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>£3,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>£2,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>£1,080</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Targeted spending incurred by the non-party campaigner will count towards the overall spending limit for the non-party campaigner during the election campaign.

**Authorisation from a political party**

If a political party wishes a non-party campaigner to incur targeted spending above the targeted spending limits in the table above, it must provide an authorisation both to the non-party campaigner and to the Electoral Commission.

This authorisation:
- must be in writing
- must be signed by the treasurer or deputy treasurer of the party
- must specify the parts of the UK in which the non-party campaigner may incur targeted spending
- may place a limit on the amount of targeted spending the non-party campaigner can incur in a part of the UK for which the non-party campaigner has been authorised to incur spending

An authorisation by a political party can be made using form **TP5**. The political party must give the authorisation to us.

The political party should give a copy of the authorisation to the non-party campaigner confirming that they can incur targeted spending.

The authorisation takes effect on the date it is received by the Electoral Commission.

**Can a political party withdraw an authorisation?**

A political party can withdraw an authorisation at any time by giving us notice in writing.

If a political party withdraws its authorisation, the non-party campaigner must not incur any further targeted spending above the targeted spending limit.

If the non-party campaigner has already spent more than the targeted spending limit when the authorisation has been withdrawn, the non-party
A notice by a political party to withdraw authorisation must be:

- in writing, and
- signed by the treasurer or deputy treasurer of the political party.

The political party must give the withdrawal notice to the Electoral Commission.

The political party should also give a copy of the withdrawal notice to the non-party campaigner confirming that they cannot incur any further targeted spending.

The withdrawal notice takes effect on the date it is received by the Electoral Commission.

How to record and report targeted spending

If a political party has authorised targeted spending

Targeted spending authorised by a political party counts towards the non-party campaigner’s total regulated campaign spending and must be included in their spending return to the Electoral Commission. Authorised targeted spending also counts towards the party’s campaign spending limit.

A political party must:

- keep a record of all targeted spending by non-party campaigners that it has authorised in support of its campaign
- include all authorised targeted spending by non-party campaigners in its campaign spending return to the Electoral Commission
- declare how much targeted spending it has authorised, and how much has been incurred in support of its campaign, and by which non-party campaigners. This declaration must accompany the party’s spending return which is submitted to the Electoral Commission.

Please see our website for more information on campaign spending for political parties here.

If a political party has not authorised targeted spending

If a political party has not authorised a non-party campaigner to incur targeted spending, all of the non-party campaigners targeted spending will count towards their total campaign spending and must be reported in their spending return.
Where you can find more information

We publish a suite of guidance for non-party campaigners which can be found at
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/party-or-campaigner/non-party-campaigners.

We also offer an advice service and you can contact us on one of the phone numbers or email addresses below. We are here to help, so please get in touch.

- England: 0333 103 1928
  pef@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Scotland: 0333 103 1928
  infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Wales: 0333 103 1929
  infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk
- Northern Ireland: 0333 1031928
  infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk