

Situations and procedures

# Registering as a non-party campaigner

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This document is for individuals and organisations who want to know whether they must register with the Electoral Commission as a registered non-party campaigner

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## Translations and other formats

For information on obtaining this publication in another language or in a large-print or Braille version please contact the Electoral Commission:

Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: [publications@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:publications@electoralcommission.org.uk)

## 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

The Commission regulates political funding and spending in a way that is effective, proportionate and fair. We are committed to providing those we regulate with a clear understanding of their regulatory obligations through our guidance documents and advice service. If you are unsure of how any of the rules apply to you, please call us for advice. We are happy to help, so please get in touch.

We use advice and guidance proactively in order to secure compliance. And we take enforcement action, using our investigatory powers and sanctions, where it is necessary and proportionate to do so in order to meet our enforcement aims and objectives.

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/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-enforcement-work](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/our-enforcement-work)

# Registering as a non-party campaigner

## Who this document is for:

This document is for individuals and organisations who want to know whether they must register with the Electoral Commission as a registered non-party campaigner.

## This document covers:

- who can register as a non-party campaigner
- who must register as a non-party campaigner
- how to apply to register
- what happens after you have registered

## Related documents and forms:

- [Overview of non-party campaigns](#)
- [Overview of regulated non-party campaign activity](#)
- [Form TP1: Application to register as a non-party campaigner](#)
- [Form TP3: Renewal of registration](#)

# Summary

This document explains who can register as a non-party campaigner and when they must do so. It provides information on the registration requirements and explains what happens after you have registered.

# Introduction

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

In electoral law, these individuals or organisations are called 'third parties'. Where non-party campaigners have registered with the Electoral Commission they are called 'recognised third parties'. In our guidance we call recognised third parties 'registered non-party campaigners'.

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

## 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 particular constituency, ward or other electoral area.
- **General campaigns:** non-party campaigns for or against a political party, or particular categories of candidates, including campaigns on policies or issues closely associated with a particular party or category of candidates (for example candidates in a certain age group).

Different rules apply to these two types of campaigns.

General campaigns are regulated by the Electoral Commission. If you are running, or planning to run, a general campaign, you may need to register with us.

The Electoral Commission does not regulate local campaigns.

This guidance covers general campaigns only.

# Who can register

Only the following types of individuals or organisations can register with the Electoral Commission as a registered non-party campaigner:

- an individual registered on a UK electoral register or resident in the UK
- a UK registered political party (including 'minor' parties)
- a UK registered company which is incorporated in the UK 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 or provident society
- a UK based unincorporated association that carries on the majority of its business or other activities in the UK
- a body incorporated by Royal Charter
- a UK charitable incorporated organisation
- a Scottish partnership which carries on business in the UK

If you do not register, or are not eligible to register, you cannot spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in any of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland during a regulated period on regulated campaign activity.

If you register with us, you will have a different spending limit. The spending limits will depend on which election you are campaigning in. We publish specific guidance for each election which sets out the spending limits, regulated period and reporting deadlines which you can find on our [website](#). Once you are registered, there are rules you must follow on donations, spending and reporting.

## Important

You should check carefully whether your organisation is eligible to register as a non-party campaigner.

It is an offence to register if you are not eligible to do so.

# When must you register as a non-party campaigner?

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'. The regulated period will differ, depending on which election is being held

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

- the UK Parliament
- the Scottish Parliament
- the Senedd
- the Northern Ireland Assembly

If you are:

- running a 'general' campaign and;
- you spend or plan to spend more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in any of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland on 'regulated campaign activity' (during a regulated period

you must register with us as a 'registered non-party campaigner'.

You can register with us at any time before or during a regulated period, but you must register with us before you spend more than these amounts on regulated campaign activity during a regulated period.

# What spending counts as regulated campaign activity?

The following will be 'regulated campaign activity' if they can reasonably be regarded as intended to influence voters to vote for or against political parties or categories of candidates, including political parties or categories of candidates who support or do not support particular policies or issues (we call this the '**purpose test**')

- press conferences or other media events that you organise
- transport in connection with publicising your campaign

As well as meeting the purpose test, spending on the following activities is only regulated if the activities are **also** aimed at, seen or heard by, or involve the public (we call this the '**public test**'): This applies to:

- the production or publication of election material
- canvassing and market research (including the use of phone banks)
- public rallies and public events

You do not need to register with us if you:

- are not spending money on regulated campaign activity, or;
- spend less than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland during a regulated period, or;
- are campaigning outside a regulated period

 Important



## Joint campaigns

If you work together with other campaigners, this may affect your spending limit and whether you need to register as a non-party campaigner.

You may decide to work together with other non-party campaigners on regulated campaigning as part of a coordinated plan or arrangement that is intended to achieve a common purpose. We call these campaigns 'joint campaigns'.

Individuals or organisations can work together in a joint campaign in the following ways:

- you can be a non-party campaigner working with other campaigners
- you can be involved in a 'lead campaign' as either a 'lead campaigner' or a 'minor campaigner'

If non-party campaigners work together as part of a joint campaign, their combined regulated campaign spending will count towards the spending limit of each non-party campaigner involved.

If their **combined** regulated campaign spending on the joint campaign is more than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in any of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, all of the non-party campaigners involved in the joint campaign must register with us, even if their individual regulated campaign spending is below the registration limits.

If you are a 'minor campaigner' you do not need to register with us and report the details of your spending as long as you spend less than £20,000 in England and £10,000 in each of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland on regulated campaign spending. Your 'lead campaigner' will be responsible for reporting your regulated campaign spending as part of the joint campaign to us.

If your total spending on regulated campaign activity during the regulated period (including your spending as part of the lead campaign and any other spending unconnected with the lead campaign) is no more than £20,000 in England and £10,000 in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland you will not need to register with us.

If you make a donation to another non-party campaigner but do not participate in a joint campaign in any other way, the joint campaign rules will not apply to you and you will not need to register with us.

## Limits on spending in each constituency

During the regulated period for the UK Parliamentary general election, the maximum amount a registered or unregistered non-party campaigner can spend on regulated campaign activity in a particular parliamentary constituency is £9,750.

We call regulated campaign activity whose effects are wholly or substantially confined to a particular constituency or constituencies 'focused constituency campaigning'. You can undertake focused constituency campaigning in more than one constituency but it does not include a national campaign across the whole of a part of the UK (England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland).

### **Registered non-party campaigners**

As a registered non-party campaigner, you must also attribute your spending on regulated campaign activity. You must attribute spending on a UK-wide campaign equally to each of the UK's 650 constituencies. If you are campaigning in only one part of the UK, you must attribute equally to each constituency in that part. In a regulated period for a UK Parliamentary general election, the spending attributed to each constituency counts towards the £9,750 limit for each constituency.

There are 533 parliamentary constituencies in England, 59 in Scotland, 40 Wales and 18 in Northern Ireland.

If you spend the whole £9,750 on focused constituency campaigning in a particular constituency, you will breach the constituency spending limit in that constituency if you then spend anything on any other regulated campaign activity that must be attributed to that constituency.

# How to apply to become a registered non-party campaigner

If you want to register, you can make an online application by visiting [PFR Online](#). Alternatively, you can register by filling in [Form TP1](#) and sending a signed copy of the form to us by email.

When we receive your application, we will consider the information you have provided and confirm in writing when your notification is in force.

Your registration lasts for 15 months from the date on which you delivered a registration notification to us, but if it is due to expire during a regulated period it will be automatically extended until the end of that regulated period.

If you want to renew your registration, you must send us [Form TP3](#) no sooner than one month prior to the 12 month anniversary of your original notification and no later than three months after that date. Your notification will expire if you do not submit your renewal to us during this time.

If your notification expires and you want to re-register, you will need to make a new application.

You can also renew using [PFR Online](#).

## What information do I need to provide?

You must provide:

- the name and address of the individual or organisation submitting the application
- details of the 'responsible person', if required
- details of the organisation's 'relevant participators' and other persons, if required
- the authorisation of the organisation's secretary (or an individual acting in a similar capacity), if required

## The responsible person

As part of the application you must appoint a responsible person. This person is responsible for making sure that the registered non-party campaigner follows the rules on spending, donations and reporting.

If you are applying to register as an individual, you will automatically be the responsible person. If you are a UK registered political party, the registered treasurer of the party will automatically be the responsible person. 'Minor' political parties must nominate a responsible person as they do not have a registered treasurer.

All other categories of non-party campaigners must nominate someone to act as the responsible person when making an application to register.



If you are registered as an individual non-party campaigner or already act as the responsible person for another registered non-party campaigner, you cannot be appointed as the responsible person for another registered non-party campaigner.

## Relevant participators

As part of an application to register with us, some organisations must provide the names of the people that make up their governing bodies or committees. In law these people are called 'relevant participators'.

The following organisations must provide the names of their relevant participators:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Relevant participators</b>
Registered company	Directors of the company
Trade Union	Officers of the trade union
Building Society	Directors of the society
Limited Liability Partnership	Members of the Limited Liability Partnership
Friendly Societies	Members of the society's managing committee
Industrial and Provident Societies	Members of the society's managing committee or other directing body
Unincorporated Associations	Where the body has more than 15 members and has officers or a governing body, those officers or members of the governing body; where it has 15 members or less, the body's members
Bodies Incorporated by Royal Charter	The body's officers or members of its governing body
Scottish Partnerships	The partners
UK Charitable Incorporated Organisation	The charity trustees

# What do you need to do after you have registered?

Once you have registered with us, you must comply with spending and donations controls and reporting requirements.

As an overview, you must:

- have a system in place for authorising spending on regulated campaign activity
- keep invoices and receipts for payments over £200 made as part of your spending on regulated campaign activity
- report to us after the election your spending on regulated campaign activity if you have spent more than £20,000 in England or more than £10,000 in any of Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland
- check that you can accept any donations you receive that are over £500 and record them
- comply with the reporting requirements for donations you receive for spending on regulated campaign activity

In addition, during a UK Parliamentary general election regulated period:

- you must report certain donations before and after the election
- you must provide us with a list of constituencies in which your regulated campaign spending was more than £7,800
- you may need to provide us with a statement of accounts after the election

# 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.

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

Visit us at [electoralcommission.org.uk](https://electoralcommission.org.uk)

Email or call us on:

- England: 0333 103 1928  
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