

# The Electoral Commission

## Are you holding a hustings?

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This factsheet is for anyone organising a hustings, and for candidates or political parties who are attending a hustings.

### Hustings

A hustings is a meeting where election candidates or parties debate policies and answer questions from the audience. Hustings provide voters with an opportunity to hear the views of candidates or parties.

When all candidates or parties standing are invited, a hustings does not provide a benefit to any particular candidate or party because they all have the opportunity to speak and be questioned.

This factsheet explains when a hustings does not provide a benefit to any particular party or candidate, which we call 'non-selective hustings'. Spending on a non-selective hustings is not regulated and does not need to be reported by anyone.

It also explains situations in which a hustings provides a benefit to the candidates or parties who attend. We call these 'selective hustings'. In this case they may need to account for the spending in their spending returns.

You can choose whether your hustings is selective or non-selective.

### Non-selective hustings

A non-selective hustings is a hustings that does not provide a benefit to particular political parties or candidates.

In our view, your hustings will be non-selective if:

- you have invited all the candidates or parties known to be standing in the constituency, region or other electoral area, or
- you have impartial reasons for not inviting certain candidates or parties

Impartial reasons may emerge from the following considerations:

- resources and other practicalities constraining numbers of invitees
- security concerns
- local prominence of some parties or candidates over others
- the number of elected representatives at the local or national level
- recent election results in the area

## Selective hustings

A selective hustings is a hustings that provides a benefit to particular political parties or candidates – for example, if you invite some candidates or parties to your hustings and do not have impartial reasons for excluding the others.

Spending on a selective hustings will be regulated in some circumstances and you may be making a donation to each candidate or party that attends.

## Further ways of ensuring balance

If you decide not to invite all candidates for impartial reasons, there are some good practice recommendations you should follow if you want to ensure your hustings is genuinely not promoting particular candidates or parties more than others:

- Inform the audience at the meeting of any candidates or parties standing who haven't been invited
- Be prepared to explain your impartial reasons to candidates or parties you haven't invited
- Make sure that candidates or parties you invite represent a reasonable variety of view, from different parts of the political spectrum
- Allow each candidate or party representative attending a fair chance to answer questions and, where appropriate, a reasonable opportunity to respond to points made against them by other candidates or party representatives

## Security

We do not regulate the conduct or management of a hustings.

However we do recommend that if you organise a hustings, you should give some thought to what you will do to ensure the safety and security of the representatives who attend your event, and control the event effectively.

## Accounting for the spending

Usually spending on a hustings is low.

If you hold a non-selective hustings then the spending will not be regulated.

Spending on a selective hustings will need to be accounted for by the candidates or parties who attend, if it is over a certain threshold.

If you hold a selective hustings, you should inform the candidates and parties that it is selective when you invite them.

You should keep a record of how much you spend, divide the total amount between the candidates or parties who attended the event and tell them each what their share of cost is.

If the amount is over £50 per candidate, or £200 per party, then they must report it as notional spending in their return after the election.

The candidates or parties must also report the value as a donation from the hustings organiser.

Candidates and parties should read our [candidate guidance](#) or [party guidance](#) for more details on spending and donations.

## How we can help

You can view our full range of guidance and up-to-date resources on our website.

You can contact us on the phone number below or via email on the address below. We are here to help, so please get in touch.

Call us on:

- England: 0333 103 1928  
[pef@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:pef@electoralcommission.org.uk)
- Scotland: 0333 103 1928  
[infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk)
- Wales: 0333 103 1929  
[infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk)
- Northern Ireland: 0333 103 1928  
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Visit us at

<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk>

We welcome feedback on our guidance – just email us at:

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

## Translations and other formats

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