

Overview of non-party campaigns

This document gives an overview of what a non-party campaigner is and when you must follow the rules.

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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

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/party-finance/enforcement.

Overview of non-party campaigns

Who this document is for:

Non-party campaigners involved in election campaigning.

The document covers:

- The types of non-party campaigns
- Who regulates campaigns
- What's covered by the rules
- The regulated period, spending limits and reporting deadlines
- When you need to register as a recognised third party
- How to apply to become a recognised third party
- What you need to do after you've registered

Related documents:

- [Introduction for non-party campaigners](#)
- [Overview of non-party campaign material](#)
- [Situations and procedures: Hustings events](#)

Forms and explanations of referendums

- [TP1: Notification of a recognised third party status](#)

Expert papers

- [Splitting spending](#)

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Summary

As a non-party campaigner, you may need to comply with the rules on campaigning in the Political Parties Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA).

This introduction gives you a basic outline of what a non-party campaigner is, when you must comply with PERA and where you can find more information.

Introduction

Non-party campaigners are individuals or organisations that campaign in elections, but are not standing as political parties or candidates. In electoral law, we also call these individuals or organisations 'third parties'.

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 constituency, ward or other electoral area.
- **General campaigns** – non-party campaigns for or against a political party, policy, issue or a particular type of candidate.

Different rules apply to these two types of non-party campaigns.

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Who regulates campaigns?

Local campaigns

If you are campaigning for or against one or more candidates in a particular ward or constituency, you are regulated under Section 75 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA), or the equivalent legislation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We **do not** regulate local campaigns, so these rules fall outside the scope of our guidance. However, you will find a brief overview of local campaigning rules in the next section.

General campaigns

Under PPERA, general campaigns are regulated by us, The Electoral Commission.

If you are campaigning for or against political parties, policies, issues or types of candidates you may need to register with us and follow the rules and reporting requirements on campaign spending and donations.

What's covered by the rules?

Local campaigns

There are limits on how much you can spend on campaigning for or against particular candidates in a ward, constituency or local electoral area. These limits are different, depending on the type of election.

These spending limits cover most campaign activities, including leaflets, meetings and websites.

For a UK general election

For a UK general election, the spending limit for your campaign is £500. This limit applies from the date Parliament is dissolved.

For a local government election

For a local government election, the spending limit for your campaign is £50, plus 0.5p per elector on the ward electoral register.

For example:

If there are 1,000 people on the ward electoral register, you can spend £55. This is how it is worked out:

1. Find out the spending limit	£50
2. Work out the number of electors x £0.05p	1,000 x 0.5p = £5
3. Add together to get the spending total	£50 + £5 = £55

This limit applies from the date on which the person you are campaigning for or against becomes a candidate.

You can find more information about when people become candidates in our guidance for [candidates and agents](#).

Important

Local campaigns fall outside the scope of our guidance.

Any complaints about local campaigns should be made to the police.

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General campaigns

Under PPERA, rules apply to election material (such as leaflets, adverts and websites) that:

- seems to be intended to campaign for or against, or enhance the standing of specific political parties, parties or candidates that support particular policies or issues, or types of candidates; and
- is made available to the public.

You can find more information on what counts as 'election material' in our [Overview of non-party campaign material](#).

If you are producing this type of campaign material, you can spend up to £10,000 in England or £5,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland unless you register with us.

If you want to spend more than these amounts, you will need to register with us and become a recognised third party.

You can find more information about registering with us on page 9 of this guidance.

Joint campaigns with other non-party campaigners

If you are working with other non-party campaigners on a joint campaign, all the costs you incur between you will count separately against your limit and the limits of the other campaigners.

For example:

You and another campaigner each agree to spend £8,000 on a joint campaign. So, the total for the joint campaign is £16,000.

Both of you will have to record a joint campaign spend of £16,000.

As the cost of the joint campaign means your spending goes over £10,000, you and the other campaigner must each register with us.

Working with a party or candidate

You may also be working with a political party or a candidate. If you are, this may affect your campaign spending.

You should read [Overview of non-party campaign material](#) for more information.

Using imprints

What is an imprint?

An imprint is added to campaign material to show who is responsible for its production. It helps to ensure that there is transparency about who is campaigning at elections.

What do you need to include?

On printed material such as leaflets and posters, you must include the name and address of:

- the printer
- the promoter

The promoter is the person who has authorised the material to be printed. If you are registered with us as a non-party campaigner, this will be the person notified to us as the 'responsible person', or someone authorised by them to incur spending.

If the promoter is acting on behalf of a group or organisation, you must also include the group or organisation's name and address.

You can use either home or office addresses.

If you are putting an advert in a newspaper, your advert does not need to include the printer's details.

Example of an imprint

A standard imprint should look like this:

Printed by Armadillo Printing Ltd, 20 Barry Avenue, Leeds.
Promoted by J Smith on behalf of the Campaign Group,
both of 110 High Street, Stafford.

Any complaints about breaches of the imprint rules should be made to the police.

Final decisions on prosecution are made by the Crown Prosecution Service.

However, we will not usually consider referring cases where it is clear from the document who is responsible for its production.

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Where do you put the imprint?

If your material is single sided – such as a window poster – you must put the imprint on the face of the document.

If it is multi-sided, you must put it on the first or last page.

Websites and other electronic material

You should also put an imprint on electronic material, such as websites and emails. The imprint should include the name and address of the promoter and the organisation on whose behalf it has been produced.

The regulated period

What is the 'regulated period'?

In the run-up to an election, there is a set 'regulated period'. During this period, campaign spending limits and rules apply.

Regulated periods apply at elections to:

- the European Parliament
- the UK Parliament
- the Scottish Parliament
- the National Assembly for Wales
- the Northern Ireland Assembly

Local authority elections are only covered by campaign spending limits and rules if they fall within the regulated period of one of the elections listed on the left.

How long are the regulated periods?

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

All other elections have a regulated period of four months, ending on the day of the election.

The rules for specific years

Every year, we publish specific guidance for elections happening that year. You can find this guidance on the [non-party campaigners guidance page](#).

Our year-specific guidance sets out the regulated periods, spending limits and reporting deadlines for the year's elections.

For specific election guidance, please see the [non-party campaigners guidance page](#).

Registering as a recognised third party

Who can register as a recognised third party?

Only the following types of individuals or organisations can register and become a recognised third party:

- An individual registered on a UK electoral register or resident in the UK.
- A UK-registered political party.
- A UK-registered company which is incorporated in the EU 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, provident or building society.
- A UK-based unincorporated association that carries on the majority of its business or other activities in the UK.

If you cannot register, you cannot spend more than £10,000 in England or £5,000 in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

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How do you apply to become a recognised third party?

You must apply to us, The Electoral Commission, to become a recognised third party. You can do this by completing and sending us a [TP1 form](#).

You must also appoint a 'responsible person' who will be responsible for making sure that you comply with the rules.

How long will your registration last?

Your registration as a recognised third party lasts for 15 months. Before you need to renew your registration, we will send you a reminder. If you do want to renew, you must complete and send us a [TP3 form](#).

What do you need to do after you have registered?

Once you have registered, you will need to comply with spending and donations controls and reporting requirements.

As an overview, you must:

- Record any campaign spending.
- Check that you can accept any donations and loans you receive that are over £500 and record them.
- Keep invoices and receipts for amounts over £200.
- Report to us on your spending and on donations you receive of more than £7,500.

For more information see these documents:

- [Managing non-party campaign spending](#)
- [Overview of donations for non-party campaigners](#)

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.

If it's easier, you can also contact us on one of the phone numbers or email addresses below. We are here to help, so please get in touch.

Call us on:

- **England:** 020 7271 0616
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Scotland:** 0131 225 0200
infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Wales:** 029 2034 6800
infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk
- **Northern Ireland:** 028 9089 4020
infonorthernireland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Visit us at www.electoralcommission.org.uk

We welcome feedback on our guidance – just email us at:
pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

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Translations and other formats

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Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: publications@electoralcommission.org.uk