

Introduction to our candidates guidance

This guidance aims to provide practical advice for anyone who wants to stand as a candidate or be an agent at a UK Parliamentary general election in Great Britain.

Standing for election can be complicated, but we hope that our guidance will make it as straightforward as possible.

Our guidance sets out the stages that candidates and their agents need to go through when standing at a UK Parliamentary general election.

It includes relevant factual material as well as links to sources of further information. Each section includes a number of forms and resources, which can be directly accessed via links in the text. You can find out more in [How to use our guidance](#).

Election timetable

We have published a generic election timetable on our website. For scheduled polls we will publish a specific timetable which will be made available on our website.

If a by-election has been called, you will be able to obtain a copy of the specific timetable for that election from the Returning Officer.

Please note that data protection legislation applies to the processing of all personal data. Please contact the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) for further information about how the current data protection legislation affects you.

We are here to help, so please contact us if you have any questions. Please see [Contacting us](#) for contact details.

Terms and expressions we use

You will normally be doing enough to comply with the law if you follow this guidance.

We use 'must' when we refer to a specific requirement. We use 'should' for items we consider to be minimum good practice, but which are not legal or regulatory requirements.

We use 'you' to cover both the candidate and the agent in this guidance. When we talk about donations, we use 'you' to refer to the person who is responsible at the time for dealing with donations.

How to use this guidance

Our guidance is separated out into sections, each of which deals with a different part of the process you will be involved with as a candidate or agent for a UK Parliamentary general election in Great Britain.

When you click on a link in the navigation list to the right, it will reveal the links to the different areas of guidance for each section. When you reach the end of a page, you can use the link at the bottom right-hand side to move to the next page of guidance.

Each section provides links to relevant forms and information resources, you will find these embedded in the text. You can also access these in the 'Resources' link at the end of the navigation tree.

If you wish to print off all of the guidance you can do so using the link at the top of the page.

Our guidance sets out the stages that candidates and their agents need to go through when standing at a local government election. The areas covered are:

Section

What it covers

[What you need to know before standing as a candidate](#)

- Qualifications and disqualifications to stand as a candidate
- When you officially become a candidate

[Candidate spending](#)

- The rules about how much candidates can spend on their campaigns
- Reporting on campaign spending after the election

[Candidate donations](#)

- The rules about donations that candidates can accept
- Reporting on donations after the election

[Campaigning](#)

- The rules on publication and display of campaign literature
- The rules about campaigning
- General principles for campaigning

Section

What it covers

[Nominations](#)

- The nomination process and what forms you will need to complete
- Submission of nomination papers
- What happens after you have submitted your nomination papers

[Postal votes](#)

- The processes for issuing and opening postal votes
- Attending postal vote opening sessions

[Polling day](#)

- Polling day processes
- Attending polling stations
- Polling day dos and don'ts

[Verification and count](#)

- What happens at the verification and count
- Attending the verification and count

[After the election](#)

- Submitting spending returns
- Access to election documentation, including marked registers
- Other post poll activities

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Contacting us

If you are a candidate or agent in England

If your question is about spending or donations, please contact us at:

Email: pef@electoralcommission.org.uk

Tel: 0333 103 1928

For any other queries, please contact us at:

Email: infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Tel: 0333 103 1928

If you are a candidate or agent in Scotland

In Scotland, you can contact us for all queries at:

Email: infoscotland@electoralcommission.org.uk

Tel: 0333 103 1928

If you are a candidate or agent in Wales

In Wales, you can contact us for all queries at:

Email: infowales@electoralcommission.org.uk

Tel: 0333 103 1929

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What you need to know before you stand as a candidate

Before starting the process of standing for election, potential candidates need to be confident that they meet all of the requirements. They also need to be aware of the rules that apply to candidates relating to spending and donations.

This guidance sets out details of:

- When do you officially become a candidate?
- Who is responsible for candidate spending and donations?
- Qualifications and disqualifications for standing for election
- Appointing your election agent and other agents

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Parliamentary constituencies

There are two types of constituency: borough and county. In a borough constituency, the mayor or chairman of the district is the Returning Officer. In a county constituency, the Sheriff of the county is the Returning Officer.

Campaign spending limits are different depending on whether you are standing in a borough (burgh in Scotland) or county constituency. This is covered in detail in [How much can you spend?](#)

Typically, borough (burgh in Scotland) constituencies are mainly urban while county constituencies are mainly rural.

If you do not know which type of constituency you are standing in, you can obtain this information from the (Acting) Returning Officer.

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Who does what at a UK Parliamentary general election and how to contact them

The Returning Officer and Acting Returning Officer

At a UK Parliamentary election in England and Wales, the Returning Officer is a largely ceremonial position.

The administration of the election is the responsibility of the Acting Returning Officer, who is normally a senior officer of the local authority.

The Returning Officer only receives and returns the writ and declares the result at the end of the count – although they may choose to delegate these to the Acting Returning Officer.

In Scotland, the Returning Officer for a UK Parliamentary election is the same person as the Returning Officer for local government elections, and they are responsible for all aspects of the administration of the election, including the receipt and return of the writ and the declaration of the result. The term Acting Returning Officer is not used in Scotland.

Throughout this guidance, (Acting) Returning Officer is used to refer to the Acting Returning Officer in England and Wales and the Returning Officer in Scotland.

You will be able to contact the (Acting) Returning Officer for your constituency by contacting your local elections office. Addresses and telephone numbers of all elections offices in England and Wales can be found on our [website](#). In Scotland, you can contact the Returning Officer through the elections office at your local council.

The (Acting) Returning Officer will offer briefings ahead of an election and we strongly encourage you or your agent to attend, even if you have been an agent or stood for election before.

The Electoral Registration Officer

The Electoral Registration Officer is responsible for maintaining the register of electors and absent voters' lists for their local authority area. The Electoral Registration Officer is normally a senior officer in the local authority and may also be the (Acting) Returning Officer. You can find the contact details for your Electoral Registration Officer on our [website](#).

The Electoral Commission

We are an independent statutory body established in November 2000 by the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. We are currently headed by ten Commissioners, including a Chair. We report directly to the UK Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

We are responsible for registering political parties and non-party campaigners, the monitoring and publication of significant donations to registered political parties and the regulation of party and non-party campaigner spending at certain elections. We also have a role in promoting voter awareness. We are required to report on the administration of certain electoral events, to keep electoral matters under review and, if requested, must review and report on any electoral matter. We also accredit observers to be present at election proceedings.

We do not run elections but have responsibility for providing advice and assistance on electoral matters to all those involved in elections, including (Acting) Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, political parties and candidates.

We are here to help, so please [get in touch](#) if you have any questions.

Last updated: 4 December 2023

When do you officially become a candidate?

The earliest you can officially become a candidate is on the date the UK Parliament is dissolved.

You will officially become a candidate on this day if, on or before this date, you have already declared yourself a candidate at the election (or another person has declared that you are a candidate).

If, after this date, you or others declare that you will be a candidate at the election, you will become a candidate on the date such a declaration is made, or on the date that you submit your nomination papers, whichever is earlier.

Once you have officially become a candidate, you are entitled to a [copy of the electoral register](#).

You are also entitled to a copy of the lists of absent voters for the constituency you are standing in. In addition, you can [use publicly funded rooms and schools](#) for public meetings.

Who is responsible for candidate spending and donations?

Candidates and their agents must follow certain rules about how much they can spend, who they can accept donations from, and what they must report after the election.

The election agent has the main responsibility for complying with these rules, even if they appoint a sub-agent to help you with your expenses.

However, after the election, both the candidate and the agent must sign declarations to say that their spending and donation return is complete and correct to the best of their knowledge.

This means that candidates also need to be fully aware of the rules.

Spending

The rules apply to spending on activities to promote your candidacy, or to criticise other candidates, during a particular period in the run-up to the election. This period is called the 'regulated period'. When we use the term 'regulated period' we mean the time when spending limits and laws apply.

Candidate spending includes any expenses incurred, whether on goods, services, property or facilities, for the purposes of the candidate's election during the regulated period.

By 'incur' we mean make a legal commitment to spend money, such as confirming an order.

This includes:

- items or services bought before the regulated period begins, but used during it
- the value items or services given to you free of charge or at a non-commercial discount of more than 10% - known as 'notional spending'

There are rules covering:

- who can authorise spending and pay for items and services
- how much you can spend
- which activities count towards your spending limit
- deadlines for receiving and paying invoices
- what records you must keep
- how and when you report your spending

Candidate spending is often known as 'expenses'. Sometimes, people think this means that spending can be reclaimed from the local council, or from us, the Electoral Commission. This is not the case. You are not entitled to recover any spending from public funds.

You can find out more about reporting candidate spending after the election in [Candidate spending](#).

Donations

Candidates can only accept donations of money, items or services towards their campaign spending from certain mainly UK-based sources, and must report them to the local returning officer after the election.

This includes donations from your local party.

If an election agent is appointed, donations must be passed to them as quickly as possible. The agent must then check whether or not the donation can be accepted.

Both the candidate and the agent must sign a declaration on their expenses return to say that the donation return is complete and correct to the best of their knowledge. So the candidate needs to make sure that their agent is following the rules.

If no agent has been appointed, the candidate is responsible for handling and checking donations.

You can find out more about reporting donations after the election in [Candidate donations](#).

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Qualifications and disqualifications for standing for election

In order to stand as a candidate you must ensure that you meet the necessary qualifications and be sure that you are not disqualified. This section sets out the qualifications and disqualifications for standing for election.

For elections taking place on or after 2 May 2024, the Elections Act 2022 has updated the grounds on which you may be disqualified. More information can be found in our guidance on [disqualifications](#).

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Qualifications

To be able to stand as a candidate at a UK Parliamentary general election in Great Britain you must:

- be at least 18 years old [\[1\]](#)
- be a British citizen, a citizen of the Republic of Ireland, or an eligible Commonwealth citizen [\[2\]](#)

An eligible Commonwealth citizen is a Commonwealth citizen who either:

- does not need leave to enter or remain in the United Kingdom, or
- has indefinite leave to remain in the United Kingdom

Citizens of other countries are not eligible to become a Member of the UK Parliament.

There is no requirement in law for you to be a registered elector in the UK.

1. Section 17(1) Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006)
2. S.18 EAA 2006

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Disqualifications

Apart from meeting the qualifications for standing for election, you must also not be disqualified.

The full range of disqualifications is complex and if you are in any doubt about whether you are disqualified, you must do everything you can to check that you are not disqualified before submitting your nomination papers.

The Elections Act 2022 introduced a disqualification conviction of an intimidatory criminal offence motivated by hostility towards a candidate, future candidate or campaigner or holder of a relevant elective office. This new legislation will be in force for polls held on or after 2 May 2024.

You must be sure that you are not disqualified as you will be asked to sign one of the required nomination papers to confirm that you are not disqualified. [\[1\]](#)

It is a criminal offence to make a false statement on your nomination papers [\[2\]](#) as to your qualification for being elected, so if you are in any doubt you should contact your employer, consult the legislation or, if necessary, take your own independent legal advice.

The (Acting) Returning Officer will not be able to confirm whether or not you are disqualified.

There are certain people who are disqualified from becoming a Member of Parliament in Great Britain. You cannot be a candidate if at the time of your nomination and on polling day:

- You hold a post that is disqualified from becoming a Member of Parliament. [3] More information is set out in our guidance [Disqualifying offices](#).
- You are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions. [4] More information is set out in our guidance on [Bankruptcy](#).
- You have been sentenced to a term of imprisonment or detained for a year or more and are detained anywhere in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, or are unlawfully at large. [5] The nomination of a person disqualified on this basis is void, and the (Acting) Returning Officer is entitled to reject their nomination paper. [6]
- You have been disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1983 (which covers corrupt or illegal electoral practices and offences relating to donations). The disqualification for an illegal practice begins from the date a person has been reported guilty by an election court or convicted and lasts for three years. [7] The disqualification for a corrupt practice begins from the date a person has been reported guilty by an election court or convicted and lasts for five years. [8]
- For polls on or after 2 May 2024 - You have been convicted of an intimidatory criminal offence motivated by hostility towards a candidate, future candidate or campaigner or holder of a relevant elective office. [9] The effect of a disqualification order is that the person will be disqualified from standing for, being elected to, and holding any relevant elective office for five years.

1. Rule 8(3) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Section 65A(1A) RPA 1983
3. Section 1 House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975
4. Section 426A (for England, Wales & Northern Ireland) and s.427 (for Scotland) of the Insolvency Act 1986
5. S.1 RPA 1981
6. S.2 RPA 1981, rule 12(2) sch 1 RPA 1983
7. S.160(5)(b), s.173(3)(b) part 3 RPA 1983
8. S.160(5)(a), s.173(3)(a) part 3 RPA 1983
9. Section 30 Elections Act 2022

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Disqualifying offices

Certain post-holders are disqualified from becoming a Member of Parliament. These include: [1]

- civil servants
- members of police forces
- members of the armed forces
- government-nominated directors of commercial companies
- judges
- members of the legislature of any country or territory outside the Commonwealth
- peers who sit and can vote in the House of Lords
- bishops of the Church of England (known as the Lords Spiritual) who are entitled to sit and vote in the House of Lords

This list is not comprehensive and detailed lists of disqualifying offices are set out in the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 (as amended).

1. Section 1 House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Bankruptcy restrictions or interim orders

Bankruptcy in itself is not a disqualification. However, you are disqualified if: [\[1\]](#)

- you are currently subject to a bankruptcy restrictions order or debt relief restrictions order made by a court in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, or
- your estate has been sequestrated by a court in Scotland and you have not been discharged

If a person has been adjudged bankrupt by a court in England, Wales or Northern Ireland, or is subject to an interim bankruptcy restrictions order, they are not disqualified on that basis, as long as they are not also currently subject to any of the particular bankruptcy disqualifications listed above.

1. Section 426A (for England, Wales & Northern Ireland) and s.427 (for Scotland) of the Insolvency Act 1986

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Can I stand for election in more than one constituency?

You cannot stand in more than one constituency at the same UK Parliamentary general election. [\[1\]](#)

1. Rule 8(3)(c) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Appointing your election agent and other agents

The election agent is the person responsible for the proper management of your election campaign and, in particular, for its financial management. You must have an election agent. If you do not appoint an agent, you will become your own agent by default. [\[1\]](#)

Once appointed, payments for election expenses can only be made by or through the election agent. [\[2\]](#) For more information see our guidance about [candidate spending](#).

You can also appoint other agents to observe the following electoral processes, which both you and your election agent are also entitled to observe: [\[3\]](#)

- the [opening of postal votes](#)
- the [poll](#)
- the [count](#)

1. Section 70 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.73 RPA 1983
3. Rule 30 Sch 1 RPA 1983 and Reg, 69 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 and Reg, 69 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 10 January 2024

Who can be an election agent?

There are no particular qualifications needed to be an election agent and you can be your own agent if you wish.

However, the following people are not allowed to be election agents: [\[1\]](#)

- the (Acting) Returning Officer or a member of their staff
- a partner or clerk of the (Acting) Returning Officer or a member of their staff
- anyone not entitled to vote at the election as a result of the report of an election court or a conviction for a corrupt or illegal practice under the Representation of the People Act 1983

If you are standing as a party candidate, your party may also have specific rules about who you can appoint as an election agent.

1. Sections 99 and 165 Representations of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Appointing an election agent

Because of the responsibilities attached to the role of an election agent you should consider carefully who you are going to appoint and make sure that they understand their obligations. You can be your own agent if you wish.

You must declare in writing the name, address and office address of your election agent to the (Acting) Returning Officer by 4pm, 19 working days before the poll. [\[1\]](#) The declaration should be signed by you and by the agent to show their acceptance of the appointment.

It is helpful to also provide a contact telephone number and email address for your election agent so that the (Acting) Returning Officer can easily contact them.

The (Acting) Returning Officer may provide a declaration form, or you could use the election agent declaration form produced by the Commission. If you do not appoint someone else as your agent by the deadline, you will automatically become your own agent. [\[2\]](#)

Your agent must have an office address to which any legal notices can be delivered [\[3\]](#) and therefore must be a physical address – PO boxes or similar mailboxes cannot be used.

Your agent's office address must be: [\[4\]](#)

- within the parliamentary constituency where you are standing, or
- within a constituency which adjoins the constituency where you are standing, or
- within Wales, within a Welsh county or county borough which is part of, or adjoins, the constituency, or
- within London, within a London borough or district, which is part of, or adjoins, the constituency

The agent's office address will often be their home address, but it could be the local party office or an office set up for the election.

If you act as your own election agent, unless you provide an office address, your home address as provided on the home address form will be published on the notice of election agents. ^[5] If that address is outside the permitted area, the office address is deemed to be the address of your proposer (i.e. the first subscriber on your nomination form).

1. Section 67(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.70 RPA 1983
3. S.69(1) RPA 1983
4. S.69 RPA 1983
5. S.70(4) RPA 1983

Last updated: 21 December 2023

Revoking an election agent appointment

You can revoke the appointment of your election agent at any time, including after polling day, and a new appointment can be made in the same manner as outlined in our guidance [Appointing an election agent](#). ^[1] If you revoke your election agent's appointment and do not appoint anyone else, you will be deemed to be your own election agent.

If you are acting as your own agent, you can revoke your own appointment and appoint someone else as your agent.

Once an agent has accepted their appointment, they cannot resign and must fulfil the duties required of them unless you revoke their appointment.

1. Sections 67(3) and 70(3) Representation of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 11 January 2024

Sub-agents

An election agent in a county constituency may appoint sub-agents to act on their behalf. ^[1] No sub-agents can be appointed in a borough (or burgh) constituency.

Election agents may appoint individual sub-agents for particular parts of the constituency, as long as those parts do not overlap. The agent can determine the parts into which they wish to sub-divide

the constituency.

The office of the sub-agent must be in the area within they are appointed to act. [2]

A sub-agent can do anything that the election agent is entitled to do within the area to which they are appointed.

The election agent should ensure that whoever they decide to appoint as a sub-agent is aware of the election and spending rules. Anything done by the sub-agent will be treated as if it had been done by the election agent.

By the second working day before the poll the election agent must declare in writing to the (Acting) Returning Officer the name, address and office address of any sub-agents and the area in which they are each appointed to act. [3] The (Acting) Returning Officer will provide a form you can use. Alternatively, you can use the form included for this purpose in the Commission's nomination pack.

The election agent can revoke the appointment of a sub-agent at any time and another sub-agent may be appointed. If another sub-agent is appointed, the election agent must declare in writing the name, address, office address and area of appointment of the new sub-agent to the (Acting) Returning Officer.

1. Sections 67(3) and 70(3) Representation of the People Act 1983
2. S.69 RPA 1983
3. S.68(3) and (5) and s.69(1) RPA 1983

Last updated: 21 December 2023

Candidate spending

The following section provides guidance on candidate spending at UK Parliamentary general elections.

This guidance covers:

- how much you can spend in the lead up to the election
- which activities count as candidate spending
- what records you must keep
- how to account for different types of spending

The election agent has the main responsibility for complying with these laws, even if they appoint a sub-agent to help you with your expenses. However, candidates should be fully aware of the laws as both the candidate and agent must declare that the spending return is complete and accurate to the best of their knowledge and belief. [1]

See [Who is responsible for candidate spending?](#) for more information about the responsibilities of the agent and candidate.

1. Sections 67(3) and 70(3) Representation of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 7 December 2023

When do the candidate spending laws apply?

We call the time when the spending laws apply the 'regulated period'.

The regulated period

At a UK Parliamentary general election (UKPGE), there can be two separate regulated periods. We call these the 'long campaign' and the 'short campaign'.

You must keep within the spending limit for each period. You will also need to keep separate records for each period because the spending is reported separately.

When the dates for the election are announced, we will update this page.

LONG CAMPAIGN

The duration of the long campaign depends on the date Parliament is dissolved. Dissolution is the official term for the end of a UK Parliament. When the UK Parliament is dissolved, every seat in the House of Commons becomes vacant until after the general election.

If Parliament dissolves before Thursday 18 July 2024, there will be no long campaign for the next UKPGE.

If Parliament has not dissolved by Thursday 18 July 2024, the long campaign will start on that date. [\[1\]](#)

It will end on the day that you officially become a candidate. [\[2\]](#)

SHORT CAMPAIGN

The short campaign begins on the day after the date you officially become a candidate and ends on polling day. [\[3\]](#)

When does a person officially become a candidate?

The earliest date you can officially become a candidate is the date of the dissolution of Parliament. [\[4\]](#)

You will become a candidate on this date if you or others have already announced your intention to stand. [\[5\]](#) For example, your party may have issued a press release when you were selected, you

might have mentioned your intention at a residents' meeting, or you may have already begun campaigning.

If your intention to stand has not been announced by the date of the dissolution of Parliament, you will officially become a candidate on the earlier of:

- the date your intention to stand is announced
- the date when you submit your nomination papers [\[6\]](#)

This must be prior to the close of nominations.

1. Sections 67(3) and 70(3) Representation of the People Act 1983
2. S.76ZA(1) RPA 1983
3. S.90ZA(1) RPA 1983
4. S.118A(2) RPA 1983
5. S.118A(2)(a) RPA 1983
6. S.118A(2)(b) RPA 1983

Last updated: 6 December 2023

Incurring and making payments for candidate spending

There are rules to make sure that spending can be controlled and accurately recorded and reported in the short campaign.

It is your responsibility to fully and accurately report candidate spending. You should ensure you understand the rules and that all spending is properly authorised, recorded and reported.

Once an agent is appointed, only the following people are allowed to incur election spending:

- the agent
- the candidate, and
- anyone authorised by the candidate or agent

By 'incur' we mean making a legal commitment to spend the money. If you authorise someone to incur candidate spending, you must do so in writing and be clear how much they can spend and on what. [\[1\]](#)

The agent rather than the candidate must make payments for most candidate spending. [\[2\]](#) There are four exceptions:

- the candidate can pay for items before the agent is appointed [3]
- the candidate can pay up to £600 for [personal expenses](#) for travel and accommodation [4]
- the agent can authorise in writing someone to pay for minor expenses such as stationery or postage. The authorisation must include the amount of the payment. [5]
- the agent can give written authorisation for someone to incur spending on behalf of the candidate so that the spending does not count towards that person's 'permitted sum' on campaigning for the candidate (see [Local campaigning](#)). [6] The person authorised to incur the spending is also able to make the payments for that spending. [7]

If any payments are made by anyone other than the candidate, agent or sub-agent – for example by a person authorised in writing to incur spending – then if it is received after they become a candidate this will be a donation if it is over £50 (and it is not reimbursed by the agent). [8] See [Candidate donations](#) for more on donations.

Candidates can also act as their own election agents. [9] You should make sure that your volunteers and campaigners are aware of these rules and know who can and cannot incur or pay costs.

1. Sections 67(3) and 70(3) Representation of the People Act 1983
2. S.73(1) & (5) RPA 1983
3. S.74(1B) RPA 1983
4. S.74(1)(a) & s.118 RPA 1983
5. S.74(3) RPA 1983
6. S.75(1) RPA 1983
7. S.73(1) & (5)(ca) RPA 1983
8. Sch. 2A, para. 2(1)(c) & para. 4(2) RPA 1983
9. S.67(2) RPA 1983

Last updated: 6 March 2024

How much can you spend?

You have a separate spending limit in the short campaign and in the long campaign (if there is one).

Long campaign

The spending limit is based on a fixed amount, plus a variable amount per registered elector in your constituency. This provides the maximum possible spending limit for the long campaign.

Your local electoral registration officer will be able to give you the number of registered electors in your constituency, and whether it is a borough, burgh or county constituency.

Fixed amount	Variable amount – borough constituency (burgh in Scotland)	Variable amount – county constituency
£40,220	8p per registered parliamentary elector	12p per registered parliamentary elector

Depending on when Parliament is dissolved during the parliamentary term, the spending limit may be reduced to a percentage of the maximum. The later Parliament is dissolved, and the longer the duration of the long campaign, the higher the spending limit is for the long campaign.

Our guidance will be updated when the election is called, to provide certainty around the timing and spending limit of the long campaign.

Month that Parliament is dissolved	Maximum limit is reduced to
Before the 56th month (Before 18 July 2024)	Not applicable - no long campaign
During the 56th month (18 July 2024 – 17 August 2024)	60%
During the 57th month (18 August 2024 – 17 September 2024)	70%
During the 58th month (18 September 2024 – 17 October 2024)	80%
During the 59th month (18 October 2024 – 17 November 2024)	90%
During the 60th month (18 November 2024 – 17 December 2024)	No reduction - 100% of the maximum limit

Short campaign

The spending limit is based on a fixed amount, plus a variable amount per registered elector in your constituency.

Your local electoral registration officer will be able to give you the number of registered electors in your constituency, and whether it is a borough, burgh or county constituency.

Fixed amount	Variable amount – borough constituency (burgh in Scotland)	Variable amount – county constituency
£11,390	8p per registered parliamentary elector	12p per registered parliamentary elector

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What records must you keep?

You should ensure that a system is in place to keep records of all your candidate spending so that you can comply with your reporting responsibilities after the election. Election agents are responsible for reporting spending after the election.

What you need to record - short campaign

For each item of spending, you should record the following information to include in your short campaign spending return after the election:

- what the spending was for – for example, leaflets or advertising
- the name and address of the supplier
- the amount or value
- the date that you spent the money

All costs must include VAT, even if you can recover VAT payments.

You must keep invoices or receipts for any payments of £20 or over. [\[1\]](#)

The agent may want to also keep copies of each example of campaign material (such as letters or leaflets) used in case there is a need to refer back to it.

You must also record details of spending where:

- you make use of items that have been provided to you
- you authorise spending to be incurred by someone else

See sections on [notional spending](#) and [local campaigning](#) for more details.

For information on the details required in the short campaign spending return, please see [Completing your return](#).

What you need to record – long campaign

Spending in the long campaign does not require a full spending return. Instead, you should make a declaration of how much was spent.

Therefore, in the long campaign you only need to record the amount of spending incurred.

1. Sections 67(3) and 70(3) Representation of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 6 March 2024

What is candidate spending?

Candidate spending is spending on activities to promote your candidacy, or to criticise other candidates, during the regulated period. [\[1\]](#)

To be candidate spending it must:

- be an activity on list of types of election expenses
- promote the candidate [\[2\]](#)

Once you have determined that something is candidate spending, you need to determine how it must be reported. It may be:

- ordinary spending incurred by the candidate or agent
- [notional spending](#), where something is provided for you and made use of in your campaign
- [local campaigning](#), where spending is incurred by someone other than the candidate or agent

The following pages provide detail on the activities that count as candidate spending and the different ways the spending is reported.

1. Section 90ZA & section 118A(2) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.90ZA RPA 1983

Last updated: 29 February 2024

What activities count as candidate spending?

During the regulated period, spending on any of the following activities will count as candidate spending if the activity promotes the candidate:

- [advertising of any kind](#). [1] For example, posters, newspaper adverts, websites, or videos
- [unsolicited material sent to voters](#). [2] For example, letters, leaflets, or emails you send that aren't in response to specific queries
- [transport costs](#). [3] For example, hire cars or public transport for your campaigners
- [public meetings](#). [4] For example, reimbursing expenses of attendees, hiring premises and paying for goods, services or facilities for a public meeting
- [staff costs](#). [5] For example, an agent's salary, or staff seconded to you by their employer. You do not need to include time spent on your campaign by volunteers
- [accommodation](#). [6] For example, your campaign office
- [administrative costs](#). [7] For example, telephone bills, stationery, photocopying and the use of databases

This includes:

- all costs associated with an activity. For example, if you are producing leaflets or advertising, you must include the design and distribution costs
- items or services bought before the regulated period that you use during the regulated period
- some items or services given to you free of charge or at a discount that you make use of during the regulated period. See [Notional spending](#) for more information.

This spending must be reported in your spending return after the election. More details on each category are given on the following pages.

1. Section 90ZA & section 118A(2) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.90ZA RPA 1983
3. Sch. 4A, para. 3 RPA 1983
4. Sch. 4A, para. 4 RPA 1983
5. Sch. 4A, para. 5 RPA 1983
6. Sch. 4A, para. 6 RPA 1983
7. Sch. 4A, para. 6 RPA 1983

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Advertising of any kind

General costs

This includes the cost of use, or hire, of any:

- agency, individual or organisation
- services provided by any agency, individual or organisation
- premises or facilities
- equipment

that is used to:

- prepare, produce or facilitate the production of advertising material
- disseminate advertising material by distribution or otherwise

For example, the hire of a photographer and premises to produce images for use in advertising material.

Software

It includes the cost of any software, of any kind, for use on any device to:

- design and produce advertising material in-house
- disseminate or facilitate dissemination of advertising material

whether that material is distributed digitally, electronically or via other means.

For example, a licensing fee for a software application for use on a device.

Services, facilities and equipment

It includes the cost of use, or hire, of any:

- agency, individual or organisation
- services provided by any agency, individual or organisation
- premises or facilities
- equipment

used to

- prepare, produce or facilitate the production of digital or electronic advertising material
- distribute or facilitate the dissemination of that advertising material via any means

including any cost attributable to increasing the visibility of content by any means.

For example, the purchase of a more prominent position on a page within a search engine.

Websites and other digital material

It includes the costs of:

- hosting and maintaining a website or other electronic/digital material that promotes the candidate
- designing and building the website
- a portion of any website or material that is set up to obtain funds for the candidate but also promotes the candidate during the regulated period

Material for sharing

It includes the cost of preparing, producing or facilitating the production of advertising material for:

- downloading and use by others
- posting on and promoting the candidate via any kind of social media channel or platform

For example, the costs of producing advertising material promoting the candidate that is posted to a page on a social media channel encouraging followers to share it.

Downloadable material

If you put material on a website for people to print off for their personal use, such as window posters or petition forms, the design and website costs count as candidate spending. You do not need to count people's print costs against your spending limit unless people are printing documents on your behalf.

If the material could be printed and distributed to voters – for instance a leaflet – you will need to make it clear how you expect people to use it.

If you authorise wider use of the material, the production costs may count as candidate spending whoever does the printing.

Networks

It includes the cost of accessing, purchasing, developing and maintaining any digital or other network which:

- facilitates distribution or dissemination of advertising material by any means
- promotes or increases the visibility of advertising material by any means

For example, the purchase of digital identities used to make material appear as if it has been seen and approved by a high number of users on a social media platform.

Other costs that are included

It includes the cost of any rights or licensing fee for any image used in producing advertising material.

It includes the cost of:

- paper or any other medium on which advertising material is printed
- physically displaying advertising in any location, for example cable ties or glue for putting up posters

It includes the cost of purchase, hire or use of:

- photocopying equipment
- printing equipment

for use in the candidate's election campaign, except where:

- the equipment was acquired by the candidate principally for the candidate's own personal use
- it is provided by another individual, the equipment was acquired by that individual for their own personal use and the candidate is not charged for the use of it

Where paper, photocopying equipment or a printer is purchased or hired principally for use in the campaign, the full cost must be reported.

It includes the cost of purchase and use of any other equipment in connection with:

- preparation, production or facilitating the production of the advertising material
- dissemination by distribution or otherwise of the advertising material

It includes the cost of food and/or accommodation for any individual who provides services in connection with advertising material for the candidate that is paid for or reimbursed by the candidate, the candidate's party or another third party.

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Unsolicited material addressed to voters

Costs associated with obtaining information and targeting or identifying voters, including database costs

This includes the cost of accessing, obtaining, purchasing, developing or maintaining:

- IT software or contact databases
- any information, by whatever means

that is used to facilitate the sending of unsolicited material to voters.

For example, the purchase of email addresses to target voters

It includes the cost of accessing, obtaining or developing data sets, including data analytics to target voters by whatever means, including the cost of agencies, organisations or others that identify groups of voters, by whatever means.

For example, the cost of any agency paid to analyse social media content to facilitate targeting of voters in a specific electoral area and the cost of modelling by an agency based on that analysis.

It includes the cost of any services to identify voters that are purchased, developed or provided before the regulated period, but are used to target voters during the regulated period.

Where information or access to information is obtained from a third party, including a political party, the commercial cost of obtaining that information from the third party is included.

Costs associated with preparing, producing or distributing unsolicited material to voters, including via digital means

This includes the cost of use, or hire, of any:

- agency, individual or organisation
- services provided by any agency, individual or organisation
- premises or facilities
- equipment

that is used to:

- prepare, produce or facilitate the production of the unsolicited material
- disseminate the unsolicited material by distribution or other means, including any cost attributable to increasing the visibility of material via any means

It includes the cost of delivering material by any means including electronic means or the physical distribution of the material.

For example, the cost of envelopes and stamps or the purchase of a system for sending emails.

It includes the cost of accessing, developing and maintaining any digital or other network which promotes or increases the visibility of unsolicited material on any platform.

For example, a candidate pays a developer to create an app that facilitates targeting of their material on a social media channel.

It includes the cost of oversight and maintenance of all social media, digital or other forms of distribution of unsolicited material. This includes the maintenance of all social media accounts, including if they are maintained by another entity/individual.

Other costs that are included

It includes the cost of any rights or licensing fee for any image used in producing unsolicited material.

It includes the cost of paper or any other medium on which unsolicited material is printed.

It includes the cost of purchase, hire or use of:

- photocopying equipment
- printing equipment

for use in the candidate's election campaign, except where:

- the equipment was acquired by the candidate principally for the candidate's own personal use
- it is provided by another individual, the equipment was acquired by that individual for their own personal use and the candidate is not charged for the use of it

Where paper, photocopying equipment or a printer is purchased or hired principally for use in the campaign, the full cost must be reported.

It includes the cost of purchase and use of any other equipment in connection with:

- preparation, production or facilitating the production of the unsolicited material
- dissemination by distribution or otherwise of the unsolicited material

It includes the cost of food and/or accommodation for any individual who provides service in connection with unsolicited material for the candidate that is paid for or reimbursed by the candidate, the candidate's party or another third party.

Costs that are excluded

It does not include any cost associated with the obtaining of data as permitted under any statute or regulation.

For example, candidates are entitled to a copy of the electoral register.

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Transport costs

It includes the cost of transport for the agent where they are reimbursed by the candidate, the candidate's party or another third party.

Transport of volunteers and campaigners

It includes the cost of transporting:

- volunteers
- party members, including staff members
- other campaigners

around the electoral area, or to and from the electoral area, including the cost of:

- tickets for any transport, including any booking fee
- hiring of any transport
- fuel or electricity purchased for any transport
- parking for any transport

where they are undertaking campaigning on behalf of the candidate.

It includes the cost of transport paid for by any individual, political party or other third party that is paid for or reimbursed either by the candidate, the political party or a third party, where the individuals being transported were campaigning or undertaking activities associated with the campaign for the candidate.

Transport to an event

It includes the cost of transporting attendees to an event promoting the candidate where that cost is reimbursed or paid for by the candidate, the candidate's party or another third party.

Transport that is promoting the candidate

This includes the cost of use, or hire, of any vehicle or form of transport that displays material promoting the candidate, including any cost associated with:

- design and application of the design to the vehicle or form of transport
- driving or moving a vehicle around a specific electoral area
- parking fees where a vehicle is used to display material

Costs that are excluded

The following costs are excluded:

- where the cost is paid for by the individual who used the transport and that payment is not reimbursed
- where transport is provided free of charge by any other individual if the means of transport was acquired by that person principally for their own personal use

'Personal expenses' include the reasonable travelling expenses of the candidate in relation to the election.

Where a transport cost is a personal expense for the candidate, this does not count towards the spending limit. It must be recorded as a personal expense in the spending return. See [Personal expenses](#) for more information.

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Public meetings of any kind

Services, premises, facilities or equipment provided by others

This includes the cost of the use, or hire, of any:

- agency, individual or organisation
- services provided by any agency, individual or organisation
- premises or facilities
- equipment

used in:

- promoting a public meeting
- holding or conducting a public meeting to promote the candidate
- live streaming or broadcasting a public meeting by any means

Other costs under public meetings

It includes the cost of promoting or advertising the event, via any means.

It includes the cost of an event that is being held via a link of any kind or is being live streamed or broadcast, where that event is open to be viewed by users of a channel or platform or by other means.

It includes the cost of the provision of any goods, services or facilities at the event, for example the cost of hiring seating.

It includes the cost of purchase of any equipment in connection with:

- holding or conducting a public meeting to promote the candidate
- live streaming or broadcasting a public meeting by any means

It includes the cost of accommodation and other expenses for any attendee where that cost is reimbursed or paid for by the candidate, the candidate's party or another third party.

Costs you do not need to include

You do not need to include:

- events that are for party members only
- events held mainly for purposes other than your campaign,

where your attendance is incidental – for example, an annual social event at which you say a few words

You should make an honest assessment on the facts of whether the meeting is genuinely being held for other purposes.

You may also be invited to attend hustings events run by local organisations or community groups. We have published separate [hustings](#) guidance which explains when the spending rules may apply to these events.

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Staff costs

Agent costs

This includes any remuneration, including allowances, paid to the agent.

Staff who are employed by a political party

It includes the cost of any staff member of a political party who

- provides services to the candidate that are for the purposes of the candidate's election during the regulated period, or
- provides services to the candidate that are for the purposes of the candidate's election prior to that time which are then used during the regulated period

Example A

A staff member of a political party spends their paid working hours coordinating volunteers campaigning for a candidate in a specific constituency. Their work time is to be regarded as for the purposes of the candidate's election.

If it is provided to and made use of by or on behalf of the candidate, then the costs of paying that staff member must appear in the candidate return as notional spending (if the value is more than £50).

If it is not provided to and made use of by or on behalf of the candidate, it will count as local campaigning for the candidate.

Please see [Notional spending](#) and [Local campaigning](#) for more information on these types of spending.

Example B

A staff member of a political party spends their paid working hours on a number of different campaigning activities, including both promoting the party generally and promoting a specific candidate. The proportion of their work time that is spent promoting the candidate is to be regarded as for the purposes of that candidate's election.

If it is provided to and made use of by or on behalf of the candidate, then that proportion of the costs of paying that staff member must appear in the candidate return as notional spending.

If it is not provided to and made use of by or on behalf of the candidate, it will count as local campaigning for the candidate.

Example C

A number of candidates attend a briefing on the party's manifesto pledges given by paid party staff. Because the focus is on national party manifesto pledges, the briefing is not to be regarded as given for the purposes of their election as candidates.

Therefore, no spending needs to appear in the candidate returns.

Staff monitoring social media and other press activities

It includes the cost of staff engaged in the management and monitoring of social media channels or platforms and the obtaining of data to allow targeted campaigning. This includes hiring staff to analyse and sort the data and the cost of staff to monitor and post or respond to any kind of social media or other account.

It includes the cost of staff engaged in the management of press activities of any kind, including staff who are liaising with, managing or monitoring any kind of media activity by any means in connection with the candidate's election.

Any other person whose services are engaged

It includes the cost of any other person whose services are engaged in connection with the candidate's election.

Volunteer time

It does not include the cost for services of an agent or any other person who is a volunteer.

You also do not have include the costs of people's travel, food and accommodation costs while they campaign on your behalf, if they meet the costs themselves.

However, any expenses you meet for them, or reimburse them for, such as transport or accommodation, do count as your spending.

Sometimes you may not be sure if someone working for your campaign is a volunteer or if you should count their time towards your spending limit. For example, they may offer similar services professionally to the ones they are performing for you.

For example, they will be a volunteer if:

- their employer is not paying them for the time they spend on your campaign
- they are using their annual leave
- where they are self-employed, you won't benefit from any professional insurances they hold

If they use specialist equipment or materials, it is likely this will be notional spending.

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Accommodation and administrative costs

Office space and equipment

This includes the rental cost of office space, including business rates, for the candidate's campaign, whether newly rented or under an existing rental agreement, and so notional spending will be incurred where such office space is provided free of charge or at a discount by a political party or a third party.

It includes the cost of office space where that office space is being shared. An apportionment must be made and an amount that reasonably reflects the use by the candidate in campaigning must be included in the return for the candidate. This amount will count towards the spending limit of the candidate.

It includes the cost of purchase, use or hire of any general office equipment for the candidate's campaign, and so notional spending will be incurred where such equipment is provided free of charge or at a discount by a political party or a third party.

For example, desks, chairs and computers provided by a party for use in the candidate's campaign.

It includes the cost of purchase, hire or use of:

- mobile phones or other hand-held devices
- the associated contracts

for use in the campaign by the candidate, agent and any other staff or volunteer, where that equipment and/or associated costs are paid for by the candidate, the candidate's party or another third party except where:

- the equipment was acquired by the candidate principally for the candidate's own personal use and the costs are not more than would usually be incurred outside of an election period
- it is provided by another individual, the equipment was acquired by that individual for their own personal use, the costs are not more than would usually be incurred outside of an election period and the candidate is not charged for the use of it

If you are re-standing as a Member of Parliament, you should read the [Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority \(IPSA\) dissolution guidance](#) for more information on the use of publicly-funded offices or IT equipment for campaigning purposes.

Example A

A SIM card with a data and calls allowance is bought for a candidate to use in their campaign, this would count as candidate spending

Example B

A volunteer's mobile phone is used to co-ordinate other volunteers, and a portion of the phone contract charges are reimbursed by the candidate to the volunteer, this would count as candidate spending

Example C

The candidate uses their own phone which they acquired for their own personal use, and no further costs are incurred beyond the usual monthly charge for calls or data. This does not count as candidate spending

Overheads

It includes the cost of:

- electricity
- phone lines and internet access

for use in the candidate's campaign.

It includes the subscription cost for media monitoring services, press wire and press release services.

Costs associated with agents, volunteers and employees

It includes the cost of accommodation for the agent where it is reimbursed by the candidate, the candidate's party or another third party.

It includes the cost of volunteers, employees and party employees campaigning for the candidate in a specific electoral area, including their accommodation costs if they are reimbursed by the candidate, the candidate's party or another third party.

Costs which are excluded

It does not include the cost of childcare for a candidate or their agent or a volunteer.

It does not include the cost of water, gas or council tax.

It does not include the provision by any other individual of accommodation which is the sole or main residence of the individual if the provision is made free of charge.

'Personal expenses' include the reasonable accommodation costs of the candidate in relation to the election.

Where an accommodation cost is a personal expense for the candidate, this does not count towards the spending limit. It must be recorded as a personal expense in the spending return. See [Personal expenses](#) for more information.

Last updated: 7 December 2023

What doesn't count as candidate spending?

- payment of your election deposit [\[1\]](#)
- costs that are reasonably attributable to the candidate's disability [\[2\]](#)
- anything (except adverts) appearing in a newspaper, periodical or on a licensed broadcast channel [\[3\]](#)
- facilities you use because you are entitled to do so as a candidate, such as a public room for a meeting [\[4\]](#)
- volunteer time including time spent by your staff that you do not pay them for [\[5\]](#)
- use of someone's main residence, provided free of charge [\[6\]](#)
- use of someone's personal car or other means of transport, acquired principally for that person's personal use and provided free of charge [\[7\]](#)
- use of someone's computing or printing equipment acquired principally for that person's personal use and provided free of charge [\[8\]](#)

1. Schedule 4A, paragraph 7 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Sch. 4A, para. 7A RPA 1983
3. Sch. 4A, para. 8 RPA 1983
4. Sch. 4A, para. 9 RPA 1983
5. Sch. 4A, para. 10 RPA 1983
6. Sch. 4A, para. 11 RPA 1983
7. Sch. 4A, para. 12 RPA 1983
8. Sch. 4A, para. 13 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Personal expenses

Personal expenses include the reasonable travel and living expenses (such as hotel costs) of the candidate. [\[1\]](#) Personal expenses do not count towards the spending limit but you must report them on your short campaign spending return. [\[2\]](#)

Personal expenses may include car hire for the candidate if the candidate does not already own a car, or if their car is not suitable for campaigning. For example, if you are standing in a rural electoral area, it may be reasonable to hire a four-wheel drive vehicle to access remote areas.

Short campaign

A candidate can pay up to £600 in total of personal expenses in the short campaign. The agent must pay any sums above this amount. [\[3\]](#)

Candidates must provide a written statement of their personal expenses in the short campaign to their agent within 21 days of the result being declared. [\[4\]](#)

Long campaign

There is no limit to how much a candidate can pay for their personal expenses in the long campaign.

Personal expenses do not count towards the long campaign spending limit.

1. S.74 & s.118 RPA 1983
2. S.76(5), s.81, s.90ZA(1) & Sch. 4A RPA 1983
3. S.74(1)(a) RPA 1983
4. S.74(2) & S.78(1) RPA 1983

Last updated: 6 March 2024

Unused and reused items ^[1]

When you use an item for the first time, you must include the cost.

Items that are not used

You do not have to report spending on items that are not used (for example if leaflets are never distributed) and this does not count against the spending limit.

You should retain the unused material or evidence it was destroyed.

If you use the leftover items at a later election, you must report the spending on those items at that later election.

Re-use of items

Where you have paid for an item, you must report the full cost at the time of first use, even if you intend to use it again at a future election.

If you do use it again at a subsequent election, you do not have to report the original payment again. There may be some associated costs which must be reported at that election, for example for storage or cleaning.

1. S.90ZA(1) RPA 1983

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Items received free of charge or at a discount and 'notional spending'

Sometimes you might use something in your campaign that you did not have to spend money on, because it was provided to you as a benefit in kind, for free or at a discount.

Some examples of a benefit in kind could be:

- space in a hall for an event
- leaflets
- providing volunteers with food and transport

When you use something provided to you as a benefit in kind, the full value of what you used counts towards your spending limit and must be reported. [1]

This is called 'notional spending'.

Benefits in kind transferred or provided for your use or benefit

Under the law there are two different terms used when assessing the value of these benefits in kind.

Items or goods are transferred to the candidate when ownership is given to the candidate. Where items or goods are transferred to the candidate free of charge or at a non-commercial discount of more than 10%, these must be valued at its 'market value'. [2] The market value means the price that would reasonably be expected to be paid for the item or goods if it was on sale in the open market. [3]

In contrast, items, goods or services are provided for the candidate's use or benefit if it is made available for the candidate's use, but there is no change in ownership. Where an item, goods or services are instead provided for the candidate's use or benefit free of charge or at a non-commercial discount of more than 10%, the provision of these must be valued at a 'commercial rate'. [4] There is no set definition for commercial rate under the law, however this may be the average rates for the item, goods or service offered by commercial providers.

In this guidance we use the term 'commercial value' as an umbrella term for both market value and commercial rate.

What counts as notional spending?

There are five tests that must all be met in order for an item to count as notional spending

1. it is transferred to you or provided for your use or benefit
2. it is transferred or provided for free or at a non-commercial discount of more than 10% [5]
3. the difference in value between the commercial value of what is provided and what you pay is over £50 [6]
4. you make use of it in your campaign (or someone does on your behalf) [7]
5. it would have been election expenses if you had incurred the spending. [8] See [What activities count as candidate spending?](#) for information about the categories of candidate spending

The following pages provide more information and examples detailing these tests.

1. Section 90C(3) & (4) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.90C(1)(a)(i) RPA 1983
3. S.90C(6) RPA 1983
4. S.90C(1)(a)(ii) RPA 1983
5. S.90C(1)(a) RPA 1983
6. S.90C(2), (3) & (4) RPA 1983
7. S.90C(1)(b) RPA 1983
8. S.90C(1)(b) RPA 1983

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Transferred to or provided for the use or benefit of the candidate

The item must be transferred or provided to the candidate for it to count as notional spending. ^[1]

This means that any notional spending will also be a donation to the candidate and must be reported separately in the donations section of the return. You can find out more about the rules on donations in [Candidate donations](#).

Example A

A party sends one of their candidates some leaflets to use in the candidate's campaign – so the leaflets have been transferred to the candidate.

If the candidate distributes the leaflets, they have made use of them in their campaign. The value of the leaflets (if over £50) must be reported as notional spending.

If an item promoting your election is not transferred or provided to you, then it is likely to be [local campaigning](#) by whoever has carried out the activity.

Example B

A party sends out some leaflets that promote the candidate, directly to voters. They inform the candidate they're going to do so in advance.

In this example, they have not provided anything to the candidate – they have just told the candidate what they are doing. They have campaigned for the candidate themselves.

Although the leaflets may benefit the candidate, the party has not given something to the candidate that the candidate can then decide whether or how to use.

This is not notional spending. It is local campaigning for the candidate. See [local campaigning](#) for more information.

1. Section 90C(3) & (4) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Commercial and non-commercial discounts

Commercial discounts are those available to other similar customers, such as discounts for bulk orders or seasonal reductions. Items, goods and services purchased with commercial discounts will not be treated as notional spending.

Non-commercial discounts are special discounts that you are given by suppliers. This includes any special rate which is not available on the open market. These are different to commercial discounts available to all customers, such as discounts for bulk orders or seasonal reductions.

For example, a printer provides a candidate with a quote of £120 to print leaflets to promote the candidate's campaign. The printer also offers the candidate a 5% discount on the order because they like the candidate's policies. The candidate pays for the leaflets, accepts the discount, and arranges for the leaflets to be delivered to voters.

While the leaflets have been provided for the candidate's use at a non-commercial discount, the discount is not more than 10%. This is not notional spending. The candidate must report the £116 paid for the leaflets as a usual payment made by the agent.

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Made use of by or on behalf of the candidate

If a benefit in kind is transferred or provided to the candidate, it only counts as notional spending if it is made use of by the candidate in their campaign, or by someone acting on their behalf. [\[1\]](#)

If a campaign activity in support of the candidate is carried out by someone else, it is not enough that the candidate has benefitted from the activity, has been told about it, or even has expressed their thanks to the person carrying it out.

A person only makes use of something on behalf of the candidate if that use has been directed, authorised, or encouraged by the candidate or agent. [\[2\]](#)

'Making use of' the benefit in kind requires that there is some active involvement on the part of the candidate (or someone on their behalf) to make use of the goods or services being provided.

'Making use of' can include:

- contributing personally – for example the candidate provides content for leaflets which the party then produces and delivers, thereby using the service provided by the party
- arranging for someone else to contribute on your behalf – for example asking local party volunteers to help deliver leaflets that are provided by their party

For example, a party sends one of their candidates some leaflets to use in the candidate's campaign, but the candidate and their agent never deliver the leaflets.

In this example neither the candidate, nor someone on their behalf, has made use of the leaflets in their campaign. This is not notional spending. The costs for the leaflets should not be included in the candidate's return as the leaflets were not used.

1. Section 90C(1)(b) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.90C(1A) RPA 1983

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Valuing notional spending

Notional spending begins with being provided with something of value. When the value is over £50, this is also a donation. [\[1\]](#) You should work out the value of what has been provided as notional spending in the same way as you work out the value of a non-monetary donation.

Please see [How do you value a donation?](#) for further guidance on valuing notional spending and donations.

Valuing seconded staff

If an employer seconded a member of staff to your campaign, you must record their gross salary and any additional allowances as notional spending.

You do not need to include the employer's national insurance or pension contributions. You will need to include the value of any expenses, such as travel or food, that you or the employer refunds.

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 2(1)(e) & para. 4(2) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Examples of notional spending

There are five tests that must all be met in order for an item to count as notional spending

1. it is transferred to you or provided for your use or benefit
2. it is transferred or provided for free or at a non-commercial discount of more than 10% ^[1]
3. the difference in value between the commercial value of what is provided and what you pay is over £50 ^[2]
4. you make use of it in your campaign (or someone does on your behalf) ^[3]
5. it would have been election expenses if you had incurred the spending. ^[4] See [What activities count as candidate spending?](#) for information about the categories of candidate spending

Example A

A party sends one of their candidates leaflets with a value of £100 to use in the candidate's campaign. The candidate accepts the leaflets and arranges for them to be delivered to voters.

The first and second tests have been met as the leaflets have been provided for the candidate's use for free.

The third test has also been met as the difference in value between the commercial value of the leaflets (£100) and what the candidate pays (£0) is over £50.

The fourth test is met as the candidate has arranged for the leaflets to be used on their behalf by arranging the delivery.

The fifth test is met as unsolicited material to electors counts as an election expense.

As all the tests have been met, this is an example of notional spending. The full value of the leaflets provided to the candidate must be reported as notional spending.

A donation has also been made to the candidate as the value of the notional spending is over £50.

Example B

A printer provides a candidate with a quote of £200 to print leaflets to promote the candidate's campaign. The printer also offers the candidate a 50% non-commercial discount on the order. The candidate pays for the leaflets, accepts the discount, and arranges for the leaflets to be delivered to voters.

The first and second tests have been met as the leaflets have been provided for the candidate's use at a non-commercial discount of more than 10%.

The third test has also been met as the difference in value between the commercial value of the leaflets (£200) and what the candidate pays (£100) is over £50.

The fourth test is met as the candidate has arranged for the leaflets to be used on their behalf by arranging the delivery.

The fifth test is met as unsolicited material to electors counts as an election expense.

As all the tests have been met, this is an example of notional spending. The candidate must report the amount they paid for the leaflets as a usual payment paid by the agent.

The value of the leaflets provided to the candidate through the discount must be reported as notional spending.

A donation has also been made to the candidate as the value of the notional spending is over £50.

1. Section 90C(1)(a) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.90C(2), (3) & (4) RPA 1983
3. S.90C(1)(b) RPA 1983
4. S.90C(1)(b) RPA 1983

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Local campaigning

In some instances, people spend money to promote a candidate without providing or transferring something for the candidate's use or benefit during the campaign. Likewise, people may spend money to criticise a candidate or encourage voters not to support them.

Organisations or individuals, who are not standing as candidates at the elections, who campaign for or against a candidate in a constituency are known as 'local non-party campaigners'. This is also known as spending under section 75 of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

Local non-party campaigners can spend up to £700 on campaigning for or against a candidate in the constituency. ^[1] This is known as the permitted sum. It applies once the candidate is officially a candidate (see [When do you officially become a candidate?](#)).

A local non-party campaigner cannot spend more than this permitted sum without the agent's written authorisation to incur the additional spending, which will count towards the candidate's spending limit. ^[2]

Example A

A party sends out some leaflets that promote the candidate, directly to voters. They inform the candidate they're going to do so in advance.

In this example, they have not provided anything to the candidate – they have just told the candidate what they are doing. They have campaigned for the candidate themselves.

Although the leaflets may benefit the candidate, the party has not given something to the candidate that the candidate can then decide whether or how to use.

The party cannot spend over this permitted sum without getting written authorisation from the agent.

If a local non-party campaigner incurs spending over the permitted sum, then this additional spending must be reported by them to the Returning Officer within 21 days of the result being declared. ^[3] There is a separate return and declaration that must be completed for the local non-party campaigner to report authorised expenses.

The authorised expenses must also be included in the candidate's spending return. [4] Money that is incurred by campaigners in local campaigns that has been authorised by the agent is candidate spending and counts towards the spending limit. [5]

The authorised expenses may also be paid by the person authorised to incur them. [6] If they do make the payments, and the spending is over £50, then this will be a donation to the candidate. If you receive a donation after you are officially a candidate, this must be reported separately in the donations section of the short campaign spending return. [7]

See [Incurring and making payments for candidate spending](#) and [Candidate donations](#) for more information.

Non-party campaigners planning a local campaign should read our [guidance for local non-party campaigners](#).

Local campaigning by parties

Parties must also be aware that any spending by the party on local campaigning for one of their candidates that is not authorised by the agent, will count as party spending. [8] At elections covered by party regulated period, like a UK Parliamentary election, this spending must be included in the party's spending return. [9]

In contrast, any authorised expenses will only need to appear in the local campaigning forms and candidate spending return as above.

Example B

The agent agrees to authorise the party to spend over the £700 permitted sum on spending to promote the candidate. The agent must provide written authorisation before the party spends over the permitted sum. In this scenario, the party also agrees to make the payments for these authorised expenses.

The agent must report this authorised spending in the candidate's return, as it will count towards the candidate's spending limit. As the party have paid for these authorised expenses, these must also be reported as a donation to the candidate if the value is over £50. [10]

The party must complete a separate return and declaration to report these expenses and submit these to the Returning Officer within 21 days of the result being declared. [11] As the spending is reported in the candidate's spending return, it does not need to be reported in the party's spending return. [12]

1. Section 90C(1)(a) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.90C(2), (3) & (4) RPA 1983
3. S.90C(1)(b) RPA 1983
4. S.90C(1)(b) RPA 1983
5. S.90ZA & S.76(1) RPA 1983
6. S.73(5)(ca) RPA 1983
7. Sch. 2A, para. 1(3), para. 2(1)(c), para. 4(2) & para. 10(1) RPA 1983
8. Section 72(2) – (7) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
9. S.80(3)(a) PPERA
10. Sch. 2A, para. 2(1)(c) & para. 4(2) RPA 1983
11. S.75(2) RPA 1983
12. S.72(7)(a) PPERA

Last updated: 14 December 2023

Splitting spending

Sometimes, you may need to split your costs between activities that count as candidate spending and those that don't.

For example, between:

- items used both before and during the regulated period
- your campaign spending and other activities such as an office that you share with your local party

In all cases you should make an honest assessment, based on the facts, of the proportion of expenditure that can fairly be attributed to your candidate spending.

For example, if you are sharing a party office, the telephone bill may only provide a breakdown of the cost of calls over a certain value.

In these cases, you should consider the best way of making an honest assessment on the information you have. For example, you could compare the bill with one that does not cover a regulated period.

It is your responsibility to report your candidate spending fully and accurately. You should ensure you understand the rules and that all spending is properly authorised, recorded, and reported.

After the election, you will have to sign a declaration to declare that it is complete and correct to the best of your knowledge and belief. [\[1\]](#)

It is an offence to knowingly make a false declaration. [\[2\]](#)

If you are still not sure, call or [email us](#) for advice.

1. Section 90C(1)(a) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.90C(2), (3) & (4) RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Spending to promote the candidate and party

Sometimes spending by parties promotes both the party and the candidate. In these cases, this spending may be reportable by the candidate and count towards the candidate's spending limit rather than the party's.

To assess whether spending is reportable by the candidate you must first assess whether it promotes the candidate.

What is spending to promote the candidate?

If an activity is aimed at voters in the electoral area in which the candidate is standing to promote or secure the election of that candidate, then it is spending to promote the candidate.

For example, activity promoting a party will be regarded as promoting a candidate whenever the item either:

- identifies the specific candidate
- identifies the specific electoral area in which the candidate is standing

Where material is distributed across a number of electoral areas, you will need to apportion the costs of the activity.

Where material:

- features a candidate
- is distributed across a wider area than just the specific electoral area in which that candidate is standing

a proportion of the cost of that material will be regarded as used for the purposes of the candidate's election.

The proportion that will be regarded as used for the purposes of the candidate's election is the cost of distribution in that candidate's specific electoral area.

If you are in any doubt as to whether spending is or will be candidate or party spending, you should contact us.

For more information on political party campaign spending, see our guidance on [party campaign spending](#).

Please see [Splitting spending](#) for further information on apportioning spending.

Examples

Spending by the party that promotes the candidate

EXAMPLE A

A political party produces a letter that sets out the party's policies and in the final lines it asks voters to vote for a specific candidate in that electoral area. Since the candidate is identifiable, the letter is to be regarded as distributed for the purposes of the candidate's election.

EXAMPLE B

A political party produces an advert that sets out the party's policies and asks voters to vote for the party in that electoral area. Although the advert does not name the candidate, it identifies the electoral area. Therefore, the advert is to be regarded as distributed for the purposes of the party's candidate's election.

Spending that should be partially attributed to both the party and the candidate

EXAMPLE C

A leaflet featuring the party leader is distributed across Great Britain, including in the electoral area where the party leader is standing. The leaflets distributed in the party leader's electoral area are to be regarded as distributed for the purposes of the leader's election as a candidate.

EXAMPLE D

A prominent local councillor is featured in a leaflet that is distributed across the entire county, including in the specific electoral area they are standing in. The leaflets distributed in the councillor's electoral area are to be regarded as distributed for the purposes of the councillor's election as a candidate.

EXAMPLE E

A party prepares a digital campaign featuring a popular party member in one area of the country. The party member is a candidate in one part of that area. The material is targeted at a particular group of voters and will appear in the social media feeds of someone who is in the target group. The target group includes a geographic location. The proportion of the campaign targeted in the prominent party member's electoral area is to be regarded as published for the purposes of their election as a candidate.

Spending that doesn't promote the candidate

EXAMPLE F

A political party produces a letter that sets out the party's policies and encourages voters to vote for the party. Although the letter is addressed to a household in an electoral area, the letter itself does not identify the candidate or the electoral area. This is not to be regarded as used for the purposes of the candidate's election.

EXAMPLE G

A party prepares a digital campaign featuring a popular party member across the entire country, including where the party member is a candidate. The material is not targeted but will appear if a particular set of words is typed into a search engine. It is not possible to ascertain how often or when this appeared to voters in the party member's electoral area. This is not to be regarded as used for the purposes of their election as a candidate.

Please see the next section for guidance on assessing how to report spending.

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Assessing how to report spending

For each activity that you have established is candidate spending, you must remember to work out what type of spending it is, so you know how to report it:

- ordinary spending incurred by the candidate or agent
- [notional spending](#)
- [local campaigning](#)

If an item or service is provided to and made use of by or on behalf of the candidate, then the relevant proportion of the cost of targeting the candidate's electoral area is likely to count as notional spending, if it meets the tests. It will then count towards the candidate spending limit in either the long campaign or the short campaign, depending on when it was used.

If the spending is not incurred by the candidate or agent and not provided to and made use of by or on behalf of the candidate, it will count as local campaigning for the candidate.

The following examples illustrate first determining whether the spending promotes the candidate, and then determining how it must be reported, if it is in the short campaign.

For more information on how to report spending during the long campaign, please see our [long campaign guidance](#).

Example A

A party holds an event in the constituency. The party leader attends and gives a speech. In the speech the leader only talks about national policies. The candidate is invited to attend and does so. They do not play any other part in the event.

The event does not identify the candidate either by name or through the electoral area.

Since the event does not identify the candidate, it does not count as spending to promote the candidate.

The spending on the event will be party spending if it takes place in a regulated period for parties. [1]

Example B

A party holds an event in the candidate's electoral area. The party leader attends and gives a speech. In the speech the leader talks about national policies for most of the time but spends ten minutes talking specifically about the electoral area and the candidate. The candidate is invited to attend and does so. They do not play any other part in the event.

As the candidate and the electoral area are named, that section of the event counts as promoting the candidate.

Nothing has been provided to the candidate for them to use, so it is not notional spending. Rather, the party is campaigning for the candidate.

The spending on the proportion of the event which promotes the candidate is local campaigning for the candidate. The party must not incur expenses of more than £700 on promoting the candidate unless they have the agent's written authorisation to do so. [2]

Example C

The party holds an event in the candidate's electoral area. The party leader attends and gives a speech. In the speech the leader talks about national policies, but also invites the candidate to give their own speech for ten minutes of the time. The candidate accepts and gives the speech.

The candidate is identified by appearing on the stage, so that section of the event counts as promoting the candidate.

The party has provided the candidate with a facility – a slot at their event – and the candidate has made use of it by giving the speech.

This is notional spending. The appropriate value must be recorded in the candidate's spending return and, where applicable, as a donation from the party.

Example D

The candidate holds an event in their electoral area, organised by their agent. Their party provides money to cover the costs of the event.

The candidate features centrally in the event so this is spending promoting the candidate. The spending has been incurred by the agent, so this is ordinary candidate spending and must appear on the return.

Any gift of money of over £50 provided by the party is a donation to the candidate and must be reported in the donations section of the return. ^[3] See [Candidate donations](#) for more on reporting donations.

1. Section 72(2) – (7) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
2. S.75(1), (1ZZB) & (1ZA)(a) RPA 1983
3. Sch. 2A, para. 2(1) & para. 4(2) RPA 1983

Last updated: 6 March 2024

After the election

After the election, the candidate must provide a written statement of their [personal expenses](#) in the short campaign to their agent within 21 days of the result being declared. ^[1]

The agent must meet deadlines for:

- receiving and paying invoices
- sending the short campaign spending and donations return to the local returning officer

Both the agent and the candidate must also submit declarations that the return is complete and accurate. ^[2]

You must still submit the return and declarations even if you haven't spent any money. ^[3] This is called a 'nil return'.

You should separately submit a declaration of your spending in the long campaign to the Electoral Commission.

You can find these deadlines, and more information on reporting, in [After the election](#).

1. Section 74(2) & section 78(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.82(1) & (2) RPA 1983
3. S.81(1) RPA 1983

Last updated: 6 March 2024

Candidate donations

The following section provides guidance on candidate donations at UK Parliamentary elections in Great Britain.

This guidance covers:

- what counts as a donation
- who you can accept donations from
- the checks you need to make on different types of donors
- how to value different types of donations
- best practices for crowdfunding donations
- the information you need to record

There are separate donations controls for candidates standing in Northern Ireland – please see our [separate guidance](#).

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What counts as a donation?

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

- towards your candidate spending
- without charge or on non-commercial terms ^[1]

and have a value of over £50. ^[2] Anything with a value of £50 or less does not count as a donation.

The donation controls for candidates apply [once you are officially a candidate](#). ^[3]

Unlike for spending, there is no long and short campaign for donations. The donation controls just apply once you are officially a candidate.

Some examples of donations include:

- a gift of money or other property
- payment of an invoice for candidate spending that would otherwise be paid by you
- a loan that is not on commercial terms
- [sponsorship of an event or publication](#)
- free or specially discounted use of property or facilities, for example the free use of an office

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 1(3) & paragraph 2(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 4(2) RPA 1983
3. Sch. 2A & section 118A(3) RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

How do you decide if you can accept a donation

Donations can only be accepted from certain sources, which are mainly UK-based. ^[1] Please see [Who can you accept donations from?](#) for details on which sources are permissible.

Before you accept any donation of more than £50 for the purpose of meeting election expenses, you must take all reasonable steps to:

- make sure you know the true identity of the donor
- check that the donation is from a permissible source ^[2]

If it is not completely clear who you should treat as the donor, you should check the facts to make sure.

How long do you have to check permissibility?

When you receive a donation, you have 30 days to conduct permissibility checks and return it if it is impermissible. ^[3] If you keep a donation longer than 30 days, you are deemed to have accepted it. ^[4]

If you keep an impermissible donation after this time, you may commit a criminal offence and we may apply to court to have it forfeited to us for payment into the Consolidated Fund. ^[5] If you've accepted an impermissible donation, you should tell us as soon as possible.

Even if you have made a permissibility check in connection with an earlier donation from the same source, you should consider whether to make a fresh check for each subsequent donation.

You should keep a record of all your permissibility checks to show that you have followed the law.

If the donation isn't from a permissible donor, or for any reason you can't be sure of the true identity of the source, please read [How do you return a donation?](#) for further guidance on the actions you must take.

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 6(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 7 RPA 1983 and s.56(1) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
3. Sch. 2A, para. 7 RPA 1983 and s.56(2) PPERA
4. Sch. 2A, para. 7 RPA 1983 and s.56(5) PPERA
5. Sch. 2A, para. 7 RPA 1983 and s.56(4), s.56(5), s.57(3) & s.58 PPERA

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Donations given on behalf of others

If you are given a donation on behalf of someone else, the person giving you the donation must tell you:

- that the donation is on behalf of someone else
- the actual donor's details [\[1\]](#)

An example of this is where an event organiser is handing over the proceeds from a dinner held specifically to raise funds for your campaign.

If you have reason to believe that someone might have made a donation on behalf of someone else but has not told you, you must find out the facts so that you can make the right checks.

If you are uncertain who the actual donor is, you should record the donation and return it.

Please see [How do you return a donation?](#) for guidance on how to return a donation.

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 7 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 54(6) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Who can you accept a donation from?

You must only accept donations from a permissible source. [\[1\]](#) A permissible source is:

- an individual registered on a UK electoral register, [\[2\]](#) including overseas electors
- a Great Britain registered political party [\[3\]](#)
- a UK registered company which is incorporated in the UK and carries on business in the UK [\[4\]](#)
- a UK-registered trade union [\[5\]](#)
- a UK-registered building society [\[6\]](#)
- a UK-registered limited liability partnership (LLP) that carries on business in the UK [\[7\]](#)
- a UK-registered friendly society [\[8\]](#)
- UK-based unincorporated association that carries on business or other activities wholly or mainly in the UK and has its main office in the UK [\[9\]](#)

You can also accept donations from some types of trusts [\[10\]](#) and from bequests. [\[11\]](#) The rules on these donations are complicated, so please [get in touch with us](#) for more information.

Although under electoral law you can legally accept donations from charities that are one of the permissible sources listed above, charities are not usually allowed to make political donations under charity law. You should check that any charity offering a donation has taken advice from the relevant charity regulator before accepting it.

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 6(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Schedule 2A, paragraph 6(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 54(2)(a) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
3. Sch. 2A, para. 1(6A) & para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(c) PPERA
4. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(b) PPERA
5. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(d) PPERA
6. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(e) PPERA
7. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(e) PPERA
8. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(g) PPERA
9. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(h) PPERA
10. Sch. 2A, para. 6(2) & (3) RPA 1983
11. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(a) & (3), s.55(5) PPERA

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Individuals

What makes an individual permissible?

Individuals must be on a UK electoral register at the time of the donation. [\[1\]](#) This includes overseas electors.

How do you check permissibility?

You can use the electoral register to check if an individual is permissible. Candidates and their agents are entitled to a free copy of the full electoral register in the run-up to an election. [2] You must only use the register for checking if a donor is permissible or other electoral purposes. You must not pass it on to anyone else. [3]

You should contact the electoral registration department at the local council or the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) as appropriate, in writing for your copy, explaining that you are asking for it as a candidate at an election or as the election agent on behalf of the candidate. [4]

You should also ask them to send you all the updates to the register. This is important because an elector may be removed from the register and so at the time of making the donation not be a permissible donor. You will receive the register in electronic form unless you request a printed version of the register. [5]

You can find contact details for local councils through our [postcode search](#).

You must check the register and updates carefully to make sure that the person is on the register on the date you received the donation.

In special circumstances, people have an anonymous registration. If the individual is anonymously registered, you must provide a statement that you have seen evidence that they have an anonymous entry on the register. [6] Evidence will be in the form of a certificate of anonymous registration. You must submit a copy of the certificate with this statement alongside your spending return. [7]

What information must you record?

You must record:

- the full name of the donor
- the address as it is shown on the electoral register, or if the person is an overseas elector, their home address (whether in the UK or elsewhere) [8]

You may find it helpful to note the donor's electoral number as a record of your checks.

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 6(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 54(2)(a) & (8) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
2. Regulation 102(1) & 104(1)(b) Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations (RPR) 2001 (RPR 2001)
3. Regulation 104(3) & (4), 108(5) RPR 2001
4. Regulation 102(2) RPR 2001
5. Regulation 102(2)(c) RPR 2001
6. Sch. 2A, para. 10(2) RPA 1983
7. Sch. 2A, para. 10(2) RPA 1983
8. Sch. 2A, para. 11(c) & para. 12(2)(a) RPA 1983

Companies

What makes a company permissible?

A company is permissible if it is:

- registered as a company at Companies House
- incorporated in the UK
- carrying on business in the UK [\[1\]](#)

You must be sure that the company meets all three criteria.

How do you check company registration?

You should check the register at [Companies House](#), using the free Webcheck service. You should look at the full register entry for the company.

How do you check if the company is carrying on business in the UK?

You must be satisfied that the company is carrying on business in the UK. The business can be non-profit making.

Even if you have direct personal knowledge of the company, you should check the Companies House register to see if:

- the company is in liquidation, dormant, or about to be struck off
- the company's accounts and annual return are overdue

A company may still be carrying on business if it is in liquidation, dormant or late in filing documents, but you should make extra checks to satisfy yourself that this is the case.

For any company, you should consider looking at:

- the company's website
- relevant trade, telephone directories or reputable websites
- the latest accounts filed at Companies House

If you are still not sure if the company is carrying on business in the UK, you should ask for written confirmation of its business activities from the company's directors.

What information must you record?

You must record:

- the name as it is shown on the register
- the company's registered office address
- the registered company number [2]

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 6(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 54(2)(b) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 11(c) & para. 12(2)(a) RPA 1983 and Sch. 6, para. 2(4) PPERA

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Limited liability partnerships

What makes a limited liability partnership permissible?

A limited liability partnership (LLP) is a permissible donor if it is:

- registered as an LLP at Companies House
- carrying on business in the UK [1]

How do you check permissibility?

You should check the register at [Companies House](#), using the free Webcheck service.

How do you check if a limited liability partnership is carrying on business in the UK?

You must be satisfied that the LLP is carrying on business in the UK. The business can be non-profit making.

Even if you have direct personal knowledge of the LLP, you should check the Companies House register to see if:

- the LLP is in liquidation, dormant, or about to be struck off
- the LLP's accounts and annual return are overdue

An LLP may still be carrying on business if it is in liquidation, dormant or late in filing documents, but you should make extra checks to satisfy yourself that this is the case.

For any LLP, you should consider looking at:

- the LLP's website
- relevant trade, telephone directories or reputable websites
- the latest accounts filed at Companies House

If you are still not sure if the LLP is carrying on business in the UK, you should ask for written confirmation of its business activities from the LLP's directors.

What information must you record?

You must record:

- the name as it is shown on the register
- the LLP's registered office address [\[2\]](#)

You should also record the LLP's registered number.

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 6(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 54(2)(f) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 11(c) & para. 12(2)(a) RPA 1983 and Sch. 6, para. 2(8) PPERA

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Unincorporated associations

What is an unincorporated association?

In general, an unincorporated association is an association of two or more individuals who have come together to carry out a shared purpose.

An unincorporated association has an identifiable membership which is bound together by identifiable rules or an agreement between the members. These rules set out how the unincorporated association is to be run and managed.

Sometimes the rules might be formalised, for example in a written constitution. However, they do not need to be formalised.

For example, members' clubs are sometimes unincorporated associations.

What makes an unincorporated association permissible?

An unincorporated association is permissible if:

- it has more than one member
- the main office is in the UK
- it is carrying on business or other activities in the UK [\[1\]](#)

You must be sure that the unincorporated association meets all three criteria.

How do you check permissibility?

There is no register of unincorporated associations. Permissibility for unincorporated associations therefore must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If you are not sure that an association meets the criteria, you should consider whether the donation is actually from individuals within it (rather than the association) or if someone within the association is acting as an agent for others.

If you think this is the case, you must check the permissibility of all individuals who have contributed more than £50 and treat them as the donors.

You must ensure that the unincorporated association has more than one member and has its main office in the UK.

You must check that the unincorporated association is carrying on business or other activities in the UK.

If an unincorporated association makes political donations amounting to more than £37,270 in a calendar year, you should make them aware that they have to report this to us. Please see our website for more information on [unincorporated associations](#).

If you would like further advice on checking the permissibility of unincorporated associations in specific cases, please contact us.

What information must you record?

You must record:

- the name of the unincorporated association
- the unincorporated association's main address [\[2\]](#)

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 6(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 54(2)(h) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 11(c) & para. 12(2)(a) RPA 1983 and Sch. 6, para. 2(10) PPERA

Last updated: 15 February 2024

Other types of donor

Registered political parties

A party must be on the Great Britain register to be permissible. [\[1\]](#) You can find the full list of Great Britain registered political parties on our [register of political parties](#).

Trade unions

A trade union must be listed as a trade union by the Certification Officer or the Certification Officer for Northern Ireland to be permissible. [2] You should check the official list of active trade unions on the [Certification Officer's website](#) or on the [Certification Officer for Northern Ireland's website](#).

Building societies

A building society must be a building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986 to be permissible. [3] You should check the list of building societies registered by the Financial Conduct Authority on the [Mutuals Public Register](#).

Friendly societies, and industrial and provident societies

Friendly societies, and industrial and provident societies must be registered under the Friendly Societies Act 1974, the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014, or the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 to be permissible. [4] You should check the [Mutuals Public Register](#) maintained by the Financial Conduct Authority.

What information must you record?

You will need to record:

- the name of the donor
- the address, as shown on the relevant register [5]

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 1(6A) & paragraph 6(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 54(2)(c) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(d) PPERA
3. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(e) PPERA
4. Sch. 2A, para. 6(1) RPA 1983 and s.54(2)(g) PPERA
5. Sch. 2A, para. 11(c) & para. 12(2)(a) RPA 1983 and Sch. 6, para. 2(5)-(7) & (9) PPERA

Last updated: 29 November 2023

When do you receive and accept a donation?

You usually 'receive' a donation on the day you take possession of it.

For example:

- if you are given free leaflets, you receive the donation when the leaflets are handed over to you
- if you are given a cheque, you receive the donation on the date that the cheque clears
- if a donation is transferred directly into your bank account, you receive the donation on the date that it is received into your account.

If the candidate has received a donation, both the donation and any supporting information regarding the identity and permissibility of the donor must be provided to the election agent if one is appointed. [\[1\]](#) Under the law, in these circumstances a donation is treated as if it were received by the agent on the day it was first received by the candidate. [\[2\]](#) Candidates must therefore provide donations and any supporting information to their agent as soon as practicable.

When do you accept a donation?

You accept a donation on the day you agree to keep the donation. For non-monetary donations, if you use the donation, you have thereby accepted it.

If you keep a donation after the 30-day period, you are also deemed to have accepted it. [\[3\]](#)

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 8(2) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 8(3) RPA 1983
3. Sch. 2A, para. 7 RPA 1983 and s.56(5) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)

Last updated: 29 November 2023

How do you return a donation?

If you know who the donor is, you must return the equivalent sum to them within 30 days of receiving the donation. [\[1\]](#)

If the donation is from an unidentified source (for example, an anonymous £100 cash donation), you must return the equivalent sum within 30 days of receiving the donation to:

- the person who transferred the donation to you, or
- the financial institution used to transfer the donation [\[2\]](#)

If you cannot identify either, please contact us as you must send the equivalent sum to the Electoral Commission. We will pay it into the Consolidated Fund, which is managed by HM Treasury. [\[3\]](#)

Please [contact us](#) to arrange for the transfer of these funds so we can provide you with our bank details.

If any interest has been gained on the donation before you return it, you can keep it. This is not treated as a donation, and it does not need to be reported. [\[4\]](#)

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 7 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 56(2)(a) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 7 RPA 1983 and s.56(2), s.57(1)(a) & (b) PPERA
3. Sch. 2A, para. 7 RPA 1983 and s.56(2), s.57(1)(c) & (3) PPERA
4. Sch. 2A, para. 4(1)(c) RPA 1983

Last updated: 29 November 2023

How do you value a donation?

The value of a donation is the difference between the value of what you receive and the amount (if any) you pay for it. [\[1\]](#) As with all types of donations, you must also ensure any donation you accept over £50 is from a permissible donor. [\[2\]](#)

If you receive something as a benefit in kind, free of charge or at a non-commercial discount of more than 10%, that you or someone else makes use of in your campaign (also known as [notional spending](#)), you must also report this as a donation if the value of what you have received is more than £50. [\[3\]](#) The donation rules only apply to non-commercial discounts. [\[4\]](#)

You should read the section on notional spending before reading this section.

The guiding principle

The guiding principle is that, in all cases, you should make an honest and reasonable assessment of the value of the goods or services you are receiving.

If the exact or similar options of the item or services are available on the market, you should use the rates charged by other providers to guide you in making a valuation. For example, if the donor is a commercial provider, you should use the rates they charge other similar customers.

If there are no exact or similar options of the goods or services available on the market, you should base your assessment on the commercial value of a reasonable equivalent. If you are still not sure how to value a particular donation, please contact us for advice.

You should ensure you keep a record of assessments and valuations so that you can explain whether or not a donation has been made.

Example A

A printing company offers you a non-commercial discount of 50% on the production of leaflets for your campaign. The commercial value of the leaflets is £200. You verify that the donor is permissible and decide to accept the donation. The price you pay for the leaflets is £100.

The printer has made a donation of £100 to you: £200 (value of the goods) - £100 (price you pay) = a non-monetary donation of £100.

Example B

A website designer offers to build a website for your campaign for free. The commercial value of their services is £250. You verify that the donor is permissible and decide to accept the donation.

The website designer has made a donation of £250 to you: £250 (value of the services) - £0 (price you pay) = a non-monetary donation of £250.

Valuing a donation by sponsorship

If someone sponsors a publication or event on the candidate's behalf, the value of the donation is the full amount that they pay.

You must not make any deduction for any benefit that they receive from the sponsorship. Please see our guidance on [sponsorship](#) for more information.

Valuing other types of donations

You can find more information on valuing office space and seconded staff in [Valuing notional spending](#) and [Splitting spending](#).

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 5(2) & (4) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 4(2) & para. 6(1) RPA 1983
3. Sch. 2A, para. 2(1)(e) & para. 4(2) RPA 1983
4. Sch. 2A, para. 2(1)(e) RPA 1983

Last updated: 7 December 2023

What records do you need to keep?

Donations you have accepted

If you accept a donation over £50, you must record:

- the required details for the type of donor (please see the relevant donor type page) [\[1\]](#)
- the amount (for a monetary donation) or nature and the value of the donation (for a non-monetary donation) [\[2\]](#)
- the date on which you received the donation
- the date on which the donation was accepted [\[3\]](#)

Donations you have returned

If you receive a donation from an impermissible source, you must record these details:

- the amount (for a monetary donation) or nature and value of the donation (for a non-monetary donation) [\[4\]](#)
- the name and address of the donor (unless the donation was given anonymously) [\[5\]](#)
- if the donation was given anonymously, details of how the donation was made [\[6\]](#)
- the date you received the donation [\[7\]](#)
- the date you returned the donation [\[8\]](#)
- the action you took to return the donation (for example, the person or institution you returned it to) [\[9\]](#)

After the election

You will need to report these details in your short campaign donations return. You can find more information about the return, and when you need to submit it, in [Completing your return](#).

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 5(2) & (4) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 4(2) & para. 6(1) RPA 1983
3. Sch. 2A, para. 2(1)(e) & para. 4(2) RPA 1983
4. Sch. 2A, para. 2(1)(e) RPA 1983
5. Sch. 2A, para. 12(2)(a) RPA 1983
6. Sch. 2A, para. 12(3)(a) RPA 1983
7. Sch. 2A, para. 12(2)(c) & (3)(c) RPA 1983
8. Sch. 2A, para. 12(2)(c) & (3)(c) RPA 1983
9. Sch. 2A, para. 12(2)(c) & (3)(c) RPA 1983

Last updated: 7 December 2023

Candidates who are party members or holders of elective office

If you are a member of a registered political party or you already hold some relevant elected office, you need to follow rules about donations and loans to you that relate to political activity before the

regulated period. For instance, you may be given donations to help fund your campaign to be selected as a candidate.

Holders of elected office are: [\[1\]](#)

- a member of the UK Parliament
- a member of the Scottish Parliament
- a member of the Senedd
- a member of the Northern Ireland Assembly
- a combined authority mayor
- a member of any local authority in the UK, excluding parish or community councils
- a member of the Greater London Assembly
- the Mayor of London or any other elected mayor
- a Police and Crime Commissioner

We call these individuals 'regulated donees'. Only certain permissible sources can donate more than £500 or enter into a loan of more than £500 with regulated donees. [\[2\]](#) You must check permissibility before entering into a loan and you have 30 days from receipt of a donation to conduct permissibility checks and return it if it is impermissible. [\[3\]](#)

If you accept a donation or enter into a loan of more than £2,230 (or donations or loans from one source that in aggregate amount to more than £2,230), you must report it to us within 30 days of accepting the donation or entering into the loan. [\[4\]](#)

If you are elected, you will also be covered by these rules after you are elected.

You can find our guidance on these rules on [our website](#).

If you hold one of these elected offices and intend to stand for election, you should also make sure that neither office disqualifies you from holding the other.

More information about disqualifications is available in [Qualifications and disqualifications for standing for election](#).

1. Sch. 7, para. 1(8) PPERA
2. Sch. 7, para. 2(1) & para. 4(3)(b), Sch. 7A, para. 2(1)-(3) & (4)(b) PPERA
3. Sch. 7, para. 8(1) & s.56(2) PPERA
4. Sch. 7, para. 10(1A) & (2), Sch. 7A, para. 9(2) & (7) PPERA

Last updated: 15 February 2024

Local party fighting funds

Many political parties run local fighting funds for candidates. If the fund is managed and controlled by the party and not the candidate, donations to the fund are usually treated as made to the party and you do not need to treat them as donations to the candidate, unless the donations are specially made towards your election campaign.

However, you will need to report donations from the local party that are made for the purpose of meeting your campaign spending.

For example, a party branch collects donations to raise funds for election campaigning in the local area. If the local party makes it clear that these donations are made for the purpose of meeting the candidate's election expenses, or a donor specifies their donation is being made for this purpose, then this is a candidate donation.

Any donations held on your behalf must be made available for your use. This includes donations held on your behalf by your political party or someone else.

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Crowdfunding

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.

Transparency

You should ensure that it is clear on the crowdfunding web page who the money is being donated to and what the money is being donated for. For example, you should make clear whether the fund is being raised to meet your election expenses, for your campaign to be selected as a candidate, or whether this is to a local party fighting fund. This is because there are different recording and reporting thresholds for candidate and party donations.

You should ensure that the webpage contains information that explains that permissibility checks will be undertaken in compliance with the law and that information about donations, including donor details may be published. Returning Officers make returns prepared by candidates available for inspection after elections. These include details of donations.

We also recommend that you include an [imprint](#) on your crowdfunding page.

Permissibility

You must only accept donations over £50 from a permissible source.

As with all types of donations, you have 30 days to carry out permissibility checks and return the donation if it is impermissible. [\[1\]](#) The date of receipt is the date you receive the funds from the crowdfunding site.

Money donated via a crowdfunding webpage that is £50 or less is not a donation under the Representation of the People Act 1983 and is not reportable. [\[2\]](#)

You should ensure that you have sufficient information from the crowdfunding provider and maintain your records in a way that enables you to ascertain if multiple donations have come from the same source.

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 with a value of over £50.

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

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. There must be a means of valuing the donation given in any cryptocurrency.

1. Schedule 2A, paragraph 7 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) and section 56(2) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA)
2. Sch. 2A, para. 4(2) RPA 1983

Campaigning

The following sections will guide and inform you on several aspects surrounding your campaigning. This includes:

- When you can start campaigning and dos and don'ts for your campaign
- Using the electoral register and absent voter lists
- Your role in maintaining the integrity of the election
- Electoral offences and reporting allegations of electoral fraud

Last updated: 11 January 2024

When can you start campaigning?

You can start campaigning at any time. You do not have to wait until you are validly nominated to declare that you will run for election, ask people to support you or publish campaign material. Election spending limits apply ahead of a UK Parliamentary election.

For more information on election spending please see our guidance on election [spending](#) and [donations](#).

Last updated: 10 January 2024

Campaigning dos and don'ts

This section sets out activities that candidates and their supporters can carry out during their campaign, those they should carry out, and things that they must not do.

More information about acceptable campaigning activities is set out in our [Code of conduct for campaigners](#)

Last updated: 20 December 2023

During the campaign, you may...

- Encourage people who are not on the electoral register to apply for registration. The deadline for registering to vote in time for an election is 12 working days before the poll. ^[1] Individuals can register online at <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.
- Remind voters who wish to vote in person that they will be required to produce an accepted form of photographic ID to prove their identity before they will be issued with a ballot paper. Where an individual does not have or does not wish to use an accepted form of photographic ID, they can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate. For more information on the accepted forms of photographic ID and Voter Authority Certificates see our guidance for polling day.
- Help voters with information about postal and proxy voting and encourage voters to apply online at <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote>. The deadline for applying for a postal vote for the election is 5pm, 11 working days before the poll. ^[2] The deadline for applying for a proxy vote for the election is 5pm, 6 working days before the poll, although in some circumstances electors may apply for an emergency proxy up to 5pm on polling day. ^[3] An elector can apply for an emergency proxy if, after 5pm, 6 working days before the poll, they have had a medical emergency, they have been called away on business, or the photographic ID that they intended to use in the polling station becomes unavailable and they do not have alternative form of accepted photographic ID.
- Find more information about who can register to vote and postal and proxy voting on our [website](#).

1. Section 13B Representation of the People Act 1983 and reg 29(4) Representation of the People (England & Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR (E&W) 2001), reg 29(4) Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (S) 2001)
2. Reg 56 RPR (E&W) 2001, reg 56 RPR (S) 2001
3. Reg 56(3A) RPR (E&W) 2001, reg 56(3A) RPR (S) 2001

Last updated: 4 December 2023

During the campaign, you should...

- Make sure any application forms you develop include all the required information, otherwise the applications will be rejected. In particular, you must make sure that the signature and date of birth fields on postal and proxy application forms are in the correct format and that there is a field for applicants to include their National Insurance number. You should use our absent voting application forms as a guide and you should liaise with the ERO who may be able to provide you with forms you can use. To help ensure that voters applications are received and processed as quickly as possible, you can also let them know that they can apply for an absent vote online <https://www.gov.uk/apply-postal-vote>.
- Inform voters to return their completed application forms to the ERO as soon as possible. Campaigners should not collect completed paper applications from voters and should not ask voters to send completed applications to campaigners' addresses.
- Never handle or take any completed ballot paper or postal ballot pack from voters.
- Make sure your supporters follow the [Code of conduct for campaigners in Great Britain](#) – this will help them to avoid situations where their honesty or integrity could be questioned.
- Make sure your supporters are courteous when dealing with other candidates and their supporters.
- Be aware of the deadlines for appointing an election agent, and agents to attend postal vote opening sessions, polling stations and the count. Deadlines are set out in our guidance for postal voting, polling day and the verification and count.
- Check our guidance on how [postal vote openings](#), [the voting process](#) and [the count](#) will work so that you know what you can expect to happen.
- Check that your systems for recording spending and donations are working. For more information see our guidance on [donations](#) and [election spending](#).

Last updated: 11 January 2024

During the campaign, you must not...

- Knowingly make a false statement about the personal character of a candidate. ^[1]
- Pay canvassers. ^[2] Canvassing means trying to persuade an elector to vote for or against a particular candidate or party.

More information on election offences and how to report these can be found in our guidance on [offences](#).

If either you or your election agent have made a mistake and have acted in contravention of the rules, you can apply for relief from the consequences of having made a mistake. See our guidance on [what to do if you have made a mistake](#) for more information.

For polls on or after 2 May 2024

The Elections Act 2022 introduced legislation which restricts the handling of postal voting documents by campaigners. The legislation will be in force for polls held on or after 2 May 2024.

You will need to make sure your supporters are aware that it is an offence to handle completed ballot papers or postal ballot packs for voters who are not close family or someone they care for and to follow the [Code of conduct for campaigners in Great Britain](#) this will help them to avoid situations where their honesty or integrity could be questioned.

1. Section 106 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.111 RPA 1983

Last updated: 11 January 2024

Campaign publicity dos and don'ts

You must:

- Use imprints on all your printed campaign material and any electronic campaign material that is designed to be printed off locally. ^[1] You should ensure the imprint is clear and visible. See our guidance on [using imprints](#) for more information.
- Comply with planning rules relating to advertising hoardings and large banners ^[2] – you should ask the relevant local authority for advice.
- Make sure that outdoor posters are removed promptly after the election – you must do this within two weeks of the election.

You should:

- Include an imprint on all non-printed campaign material, including websites.
- Consider how to make your campaign accessible to all voters - for example disabled voters or voters whose first language isn't English or, in Wales, Welsh, may need campaign material provided in a particular format. You may want to make contact with disability groups in your local area for advice.

You must not:

- Produce material that looks like the poll cards sent to voters by the (Acting) Returning Officer. ^[3]
- Pay people to display your adverts (unless they display adverts as part of their normal business). ^[4]

1. Section 143 Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, section 110 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements)(England) Regulations 2007; Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements)(Scotland) Regulations 1984; and for Wales, Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 1992
3. S.94 RPA 1983
4. S.109 RPA 1983

Last updated: 11 January 2024

Using imprints

What is an imprint?

An imprint must be added by law to all printed election material to show who is responsible for its production. [\[1\]](#)

You should ensure that your imprint is clear and visible.

Our guide on [Candidate imprints](#) on printed material explains the rules you must follow if you are a candidate in this type of election.

Under the Elections Act 2022, imprints are also required on certain digital material. For the imprint requirements on digital material, please see our statutory guidance on [digital imprints](#).

1. Section 143 Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000, section 10 Representation of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Freepost

If you are shown as standing nominated in the statement of persons nominated you will be entitled to free postage on an election address to electors in the constituency. The address must only contain matters relating to the election.

Before the publication of the statement of persons nominated, if you declare yourself to be a candidate you are entitled to exercise this right, but only if you give a security that is required by

Royal Mail for the payment of postage in case you are not shown on the statement as standing nominated.

You may have postage paid on either:

- one unaddressed election communication of up to 60 grams to every postal address, or
- one election communication of up to 60 grams addressed to each elector

If you are considering exercising this right, you should contact Royal Mail to make arrangements. Royal Mail's terms and conditions must be complied with.

We strongly advise that you consult Royal Mail's guidance on candidate mailings at www.royalmail.com/business/manage-mail/candidate-mail.

Last updated: 8 January 2024

Using the electoral register and lists of absent voters

Once you officially become a candidate you are entitled to receive a free copy of the electoral register. ^[1] You are also entitled to the lists of people voting by post or proxy ('the lists of absent voters') for the constituency that you are contesting.

Registered political parties are entitled to receive a copy of the electoral register at any time.

There are two registers

Using information received from the public, registration officers keep two registers:

THE ELECTORAL REGISTER

The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in public elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as detecting crime (e.g. fraud), calling people for jury service, checking credit applications.

THE OPEN REGISTER (ALSO KNOWN AS THE EDITED REGISTER)

The open register is an extract of the electoral register, but is not used for elections. It can be bought by any person, company or organisation. For example, it is used by businesses and charities to confirm name and address details. Electors can request not to have their name and address included in the open register.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, reg. 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Restrictions on the use of the information contained in the electoral register and lists of absent voters

The electoral register and lists of absent voters contain people's personal data and so their use is very carefully controlled.

You can use them to:

- complete your nomination form
- help you campaign
- check that donations are permissible

You must not release to any person any details that appear only in the full register and not on the open register which is available for general sale. You must not use the full register and absent voters' lists for any other purpose not listed above.

If you have supplied a copy of the register or absent voters' lists to campaign workers, they must also comply with the requirements above. [\[1\]](#)

You must ensure that you keep the electoral register secure and list of absent voter secure. [\[2\]](#) Once you no longer need the register and lists of absent voters for any electoral purpose, you should securely destroy any copies supplied to you as a candidate in accordance with the [Information Commissioner's guidelines](#).

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Article 5 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2016

Last updated: 29 November 2023

Applying for a copy of the electoral register and the lists of absent voters

Copies of the register and lists of absent voters can be obtained from the Electoral Registration Officer. You can find their contact details on

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter/your-election-information.

The request must be made in writing [\[1\]](#) and we have made a register request form and an absent voters' lists request form available for this purpose.

The register and lists will be supplied in electronic format unless a paper copy is specifically requested.

The version of the electoral register and lists supplied will be the ones current at the time of application. You may also request the updates to the electoral registers and lists that are published in the lead-up to the poll, including the list of newly registered electors when it is published five working days before the poll.

Any person found breaching the restrictions on use of the electoral register could face an unlimited fine in England and Wales, or a fine of up to £5,000 in Scotland. For more information see our guidance on [restrictions on the use of the electoral register](#).

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Using schools and rooms for public meetings

You may want to engage with the public at public meetings, promoting your views and responding to questions from the audience.

The ERO of each council in England and Wales, and the Proper Officer of each council in Scotland, keep a list of the location and availability of meeting rooms in their area. They will make this list available for inspection by candidates and election agents (and persons authorised by them) from the dissolution of the UK Parliament.

Once you are a candidate you will be able to use available public rooms up until the day before polling day. [\[1\]](#)

Contact details for EROs can be found on our [website](#). In Scotland you can obtain the contact details of the Proper Officer through the local council.

You should contact the owner of the premises to make a booking, giving reasonable notice to reduce the risk of the request being refused.

There is no hire charge for using these rooms, but you must pay for any expenses incurred, such as heating, lighting and cleaning, and for any damage to the premises.

Your right to use the room does not include hours during which a school is used for educational purposes or when any prior letting of a room has been agreed.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Maintaining the integrity of the election

Candidates are one of the key public faces of the election, and your conduct will be scrutinised in detail by opponents, the media and voters.

Voters should be able to trust that candidates will comply with the law and maintain the integrity of the election process.

Election agents are responsible for your campaign and are legally responsible for its financial management.

You should also make sure that your supporters fully understand the law and know what they need to do to ensure that voters can participate freely in this election.

The police can only investigate allegations of electoral fraud where there is evidence to show that an offence has taken place. Claims or allegations should always be substantiated when referred to the police.

You should also consider the impact on public trust and confidence of making false or unsubstantiated allegations about the conduct of other campaigners.

Neither the (Acting) Returning Officer nor the Commission regulate these offences. For details of how to report any allegations see our guidance on [Reporting allegations of electoral fraud](#).

Last updated: 11 January 2024

Table of offences

The following table shows a number of electoral and non-electoral offences of which you should be aware. You should seek your own legal advice where necessary.

FOR POLLS ON OR AFTER 2 MAY 2024

The Elections Act 2022 introduced legislation which made changes to some electoral offences. The table below highlights the offences that will change when the legislation is in force for polls held on or after 2 May 2024.

Bribery [1]

The offence of bribery includes where someone directly or indirectly gives any money or procures any office to or for any voter, in order to induce any voter to vote or not vote.

Treating [2]

A person is guilty of treating if either before, during or after an election they directly or indirectly give or provide any food, drink, entertainment or provision to corruptly influence any voter to vote or refrain from voting.

Treating requires a corrupt intent - it does not apply to ordinary hospitality.

Undue influence [3]

A person is guilty of undue influence if they directly or indirectly make use of or threaten to make use of force, violence or restraint, or inflict or threaten to inflict injury, damage or harm in order to induce or compel that person to vote or refrain from voting.

A person may also be guilty of undue influence if they impede or prevent any voter from freely exercising their right to vote – even where the attempt is unsuccessful.

Undue influence doesn't exclusively relate to physical access to the polling station. For example, a leaflet that threatens to make use of force in order to induce a voter to vote in a particular way could also be undue influence.

For polls on or after 2 May 2024

A person is guilty of undue influence if they carry out an activity on account of:

Undue influence [\[4\]](#)

- a person having voted in a particular way or refrained from voting
- assuming a person to have voted in a particular way or to have refrained from voting

These activities are:

- using or threatening to use violence against a person
- damaging or destroying, or threatening to damage or destroy a person's property
- damaging or destroying, or threatening to damage or destroy a person's reputation
- causing or threatening to cause financial loss to a person
- causing spiritual injury to, or placing undue spiritual pressure on, a person doing any other act designed to intimidate a person
- doing any act designed to deceive a person in relation to the administration of an election

Undue influence doesn't exclusively relate to physical access to the polling station. For example, a leaflet that threatens to make use of force in order to induce a voter to vote in a particular way could also be undue influence.

For polls on or after 2 May 2024

Handling of postal voting documents by political campaigners [\[5\]](#)

It is an offence for political campaigners to handle completed ballot papers or postal ballot packs for voters who are not their close family or someone they care for.

Personation [\[6\]](#)

Personation is where an individual votes as someone else either by post or in person at a polling station, as an elector or as a proxy.

This offence applies if the person that is being personated is living, dead or fictitious. Aiding, abetting, counselling or procuring the offence of personation is also an offence.

It is an offence to make or publish a false statement of fact about the personal character or conduct of a candidate in order to affect the return of a candidate at an election.

False statements that are not about a candidate's personal character or conduct are not illegal under electoral law, but could be considered as libel or slander.

It is also an illegal practice to make a false statement of a candidate's withdrawal in order to promote or procure the election of another candidate.

It is an offence to provide a statement on a nomination paper, which you know to be false. For example, if you know you are disqualified from election you must not sign the consent to nomination.

It is an offence to supply false information on a registration, postal vote or proxy vote application form. False information includes a false signature.

A person is guilty of an offence if they apply to vote by post or proxy to gain a vote to which they are not entitled or to deprive someone else of their vote.

There are various offences regarding multiple voting and proxy voting, including voting by post as an elector or proxy when subject to a legal incapacity to vote and

False statements

About a candidate's personal character or conduct [\[7\]](#)

False statements

In nomination papers [\[8\]](#)

False registration information and false postal/proxy voting application [\[9\]](#)

False application to vote by post or by proxy [\[10\]](#)

Multiple voting and proxy voting offences [\[11\]](#)

inducing or procuring another to commit the offence.

Everyone involved in the election process or attending certain proceedings must maintain the secrecy of the ballot. The (Acting) Returning Officer will give a copy of the official secrecy requirements to everyone who attends the opening of postal votes or the counting of ballot papers and to polling agents.

Breaches of the secrecy of the ballot [\[12\]](#)

Certain offences relate specifically to election campaign publicity material. Printed election campaign publicity material must contain an imprint [\[13\]](#) and not resemble a poll card. [\[14\]](#) Campaign publicity material must also not contain a false statement as to the personal character or conduct of another candidate. [\[15\]](#)

Campaign publicity material

Neither the Returning Officer nor the Commission regulate the content of campaign material and are not able to comment on the legality of any particular electoral material beyond what is covered in this guidance.

Under the Public Order Act 1986, it is an offence to publish or distribute threatening, abusive or insulting material that is intended to stir up racial hatred or which is likely to stir up racial hatred.

Racial hatred

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. S.114 RPA 1983
3. S.115 RPA 1983
4. S.114A RPA 1983
5. S.114A RPA 1983
6. S.60 RPA 1983
7. S.106 RPA 1983
8. S.65A RPA 1983
9. S.13D RPA 1983
10. S.62A RPA 1983
11. S.61 RPA 1983
12. S.66 RPA 1983
13. Section 143 Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA 2000), s.110 RPA 1983
14. S.94 RPA 1983
15. S.106 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What if you have made a mistake?

If either you or your agent has mistakenly acted in contravention of the election rules, you can apply for relief from the penalties for any offence.

You should always seek legal advice if considering applying for relief.

For more information, you should contact:

In England and Wales:

Election Petitions Office
Room E105
Royal Courts of Justice
Strand
London WC2A 2LL
Email: Election_Petitions@justice.gov.uk
Phone: 0207 947 6877

In Scotland:

The Petitions Department
Court of Session
Parliament Square
Edinburgh EH1 1RQ
Email: supreme.courts@scotcourts.gov.uk

Last updated: 8 January 2024

Reporting allegations of electoral fraud

If you are concerned that electoral fraud may have been committed, you should first speak to the Electoral Registration Officer or the (Acting) Returning Officer.

They may be able to explain whether or not electoral fraud has been committed, and can refer your concerns to the police if necessary. They can also provide you with the details of the police contact for the relevant police force so that you can report the allegation yourself.

If you have evidence that an electoral offence has been committed you should contact the police immediately, using the 101 non-emergency number unless there is a crime in progress, in which case you should use the standard 999 emergency line.

Every police force has a dedicated Single Point of Contact Officer who will be able to provide advice to ensure that your allegations are properly investigated. You should be prepared to give them a statement and substantiate your allegation.

If you do not want to give a statement to the police, you can report your concerns anonymously on the [Crimestoppers website](#) or by calling Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

In England and Wales, you can find contact details of Electoral Registration Officers and (Acting) Returning Officers on our [website](#). In Scotland, you can also find contact details of EROs on www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/voter and you can contact ROs through the local council.

Please note that if your allegation relates to party, election or registered campaigner finance matters, such as spending or donations, then you should follow the advice given on our [website](#).

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Nominations

The following sections provide guidance on standing as a candidate at a UK Parliamentary general election in Great Britain.

The guidance covers:

- The nomination process, including what forms you need to complete
- When and how you need to submit your nomination papers
- What happens after you submit your nomination papers

There are specific rules that candidates need to follow, depending on whether they are standing as a political party candidate or standing as an independent candidate. These differences will be clearly highlighted throughout the guidance.

Guidance on standing for other elections can be found on our [website](#).

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Completing your nomination papers

To become nominated as a candidate at a UK Parliamentary general election in Great Britain, you need to submit a completed set of nomination papers to the place fixed by the (A)RO by 4pm, 19 working days before the poll. [\[1\]](#)

This deadline is set out in law and cannot be changed for any reason.

The start date from which you will be able to submit nomination papers, as well as the times and place for delivery, will be set out in the notice of election published by the (A)RO. [\[2\]](#)

There are three nomination papers that you must submit to make your nomination valid: [\[3\]](#)

- [the nomination form](#)
- [a home address form](#)
- [your consent to nomination](#)

The (A)RO can hold your nomination paper invalid if the particulars of your nomination are not as required by law. The (A)RO can also reject your nomination if they conclude it is clearly a sham, for example an obviously fictitious name is provided.

If you, [your agent](#) or someone you trust are unable to complete the nomination form, the (A)RO can help by preparing the form for your signature. [\[4\]](#)

The (A)RO may also be able to offer informal checks of your completed nomination papers before you submit them. You should find out from the (A)RO whether they plan to offer informal checks.

Note that any information you provide on your nomination papers must be true to the best of your knowledge. It is an offence to provide a false statement on your nomination papers. Providing a false statement could invalidate your election, and is also punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment. In England and Wales, the fine is unlimited; [\[5\]](#) in Scotland, it is up to £10,000 or unlimited if convicted on indictment. [\[6\]](#)

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 5 Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rules 6 and 8 Sch 1 RPA 1983
4. Rule 7 Sch 1 RPA 1983
5. S.65A and 168 RPA 1983 (as amended)
6. S.65A and 168 RPA 1983 (as amended)

Last updated: 4 December 2023

The nomination form

Your name and description (if you choose to use one) should be written on the nomination form before you ask subscribers to sign the form.

The nomination form must be completed in English or, in Wales, in English or Welsh.

We have provided a nomination form which you can use:

The form must contain:

YOUR FULL NAME ^[1]

- This means your surname and other names in full.
- Using initials only could lead to your nomination paper being rejected.
- Do not use prefixes such as Mr, Mrs, Dr or Cllr as part of your name.
- The same applies to suffixes. However, if you have a title, you can use this as your full name. For example, if your actual name is Joseph Smith but your hereditary title is Joseph Avon, you can use the name Joseph Avon as your full name.

SIGNATURES OF 10 REGISTERED ELECTORS ^[2]

- Also known as subscribers from the constituency.
- Your subscribers must be on the Parliamentary electoral register that is in force on the last day for publication of the notice of election (i.e. on the second day after the (Acting) Returning Officer has received the writ). For more information on see our guidance on [subscribers](#).

DESCRIPTION

You can also choose to use a description on your nomination paper. The type of description you can use depends on whether you are an independent or party candidate.

Independent candidates

You can only use “Independent”, and/or “Annibynno!” in

Wales, as your description.

You can use a party name or description. If you are a candidate in Wales, you may use either the English version, Welsh version or both versions of either the party name or description as long as they are registered with the Commission. Welsh translations of party names are listed on the website under 'other name' and translations of descriptions are listed to the right of the description under 'translation(s)'.

Political party candidates

If you want to use a party name or description, you must also submit alongside your other nomination papers a certificate that shows that you are authorised to use the party's name or description. More information is set out in our guidance for [candidates standing on behalf of political parties](#).

Special rules apply to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The Speaker can use the following description: "The Speaker seeking re-election".

You do not have to use a description. If you choose not to use a description, you can leave the description field of the nomination form blank.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 7 Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 22 December 2023

Commonly used name(s)

If you commonly use a different name from your actual name, you can ask for your commonly used name(s) to be used instead of your actual name. [\[1\]](#)

You can request to use a commonly used forename, surname or both.

For example, you may be known by your abbreviated name 'Andy', rather than your full first name 'Andrew'. In that case, you can write 'Andy' into the commonly used forename box on the nomination paper if you would rather that name appear on the ballot paper.

For polls before 2 May 2024

You cannot use your first name as a commonly used name so that only your first name and surname appear on a ballot paper, thus excluding your middle name.

The legislation makes it clear that a commonly used name is one which is different from any other forename or surname. [\[2\]](#) This means that a forename in its original format cannot be used as a commonly used name.

If you wish to use a commonly used forename and/or surname then these must be different from your full name as it appears on the nomination form. For example, in the case of Andrew John Smith, he could not use Andrew Smith as his commonly used name, although he would be able to use Andy Smith (if Andy was the name by which he is commonly known).

If you have a hyphenated surname you may choose to use one part of your surname if this is how you are commonly known. For example, in the case of Andrew Smith-Roberts, he could use Andrew Roberts, or Andrew Smith (if either was the name by which he is commonly known).

You may also use initials as part of your commonly used name if you are commonly known by them.

For polls on or after 2 May 2024

The Elections Act 2022 introduced legislation which permits greater flexibility in the names a candidate can put on their nomination paper (and therefore, the ballot paper). This new legislation will be in force for a poll taking place on or after 2 May 2024.

If you:

- commonly use a surname or forename that is different from any other surname or forename you have
- use one or more forenames or surname in a different way from the way they are stated on your nomination form

you may state your commonly used name or names on your nomination form in addition to your full names that you have provided. [\[3\]](#)

Any commonly used name(s) would then appear on:

- the statement of persons nominated
- the notice of poll, and
- the ballot papers

The (A)RO will disallow commonly used names that are likely to mislead or confuse electors, or are obscene or offensive. [\[4\]](#) If the name(s) are not permissible, the (A)RO will write to you stating the reason for rejection. In those cases, your actual name will be used instead.

If either the commonly used forename or surname box on the nomination paper is left blank, then your actual forename or surname, depending on which commonly used name box has been left blank, will be used.

It is an offence to give a false statement on your nomination form. Therefore if you choose to provide a commonly used name you must ensure that it is a forename or surname which you commonly use.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 6(2A) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 6(2A) Sch 1 RPA 1983
4. Rule 14(2B) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 3 January 2024

Signatures of subscribers

Each nomination form needs to be signed (subscribed) by 10 electors, who are on the parliamentary electoral register in the constituency you are planning to contest.

The first two electors will sign and print their names as proposer and seconder, and the remaining eight as assenters.

The electors must be of voting age by polling day and be on the register that is in force on the last day for publication of notice of election.

Each elector may only subscribe one nomination form at the election. [\[1\]](#)

If an elector does sign two or more nomination forms, the first nomination form delivered to the (Acting) Returning Officer will be accepted and the rest will be invalid.

You should therefore always enquire, before asking a subscriber to sign your form, if they have already signed someone else's.

If a nomination form contains more than ten subscribers' signatures, only the first ten will be accepted. [\[2\]](#) If any of the first ten subscribers are invalid, the (A)RO must hold the nomination form invalid, regardless of whether the form contains more than ten. [\[3\]](#)

There is nothing to prevent you from subscribing your own nomination providing that you are registered in the constituency.

There may be some electors on the register who have registered anonymously because of risks to their safety.

Anonymously registered electors may not subscribe nomination forms.

Anonymous electors are shown on the register with just their poll number and the letter 'N' (rather than with their name and address).

Nomination forms should not be altered once they are subscribed. All of your details should be completed before you invite anyone to subscribe your nomination. Once the (A)RO has formally accepted a nomination form, signatures cannot be withdrawn.

The elector number

The elector number of each subscriber, as it appears on the electoral register, must be entered on the nomination form. ^[4] The elector number includes the distinctive numbers or letters of the polling district, which can usually be found at the front of the register.

Both the (A)RO and ERO will be able to advise you how the register is laid out.

You will be entitled to a free copy of the electoral register. ^[5]

You should use it to ensure that your nomination form is properly subscribed.

In line with data protection legislation and the electoral provision under which you have obtained the register, you must ensure that you keep the electoral register secure and, once you have finished with it, ensure that it is securely destroyed.

Data protection considerations

When collecting subscriber information, you should point out what the information will be used for and how personal data will be processed and kept secure. The lawful basis to collect the information in this form is that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest and exercise of official authority as set out in Representation of the People Act 1983 and associated regulations.

You should also explain that the information will be shared with RO. For further information on data protection and processing you should refer to the RO's privacy notice on their website.

Data protection legislation applies to the processing of all personal data. Please contact the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) for further information about how the current data protection legislation may affect you as a candidate.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 7(2) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rules 7(2) and 12(2)(b) Sch 1 RPA 1983
4. Rule 7 Sch 1 RPA 1983
5. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, reg. 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Consent to nomination

You must formally consent to your nomination in writing. [\[1\]](#)

The content of the consent to nomination form is fixed by law and you must return the entire form in order for your nomination to be valid. We have provided a consent to nomination form as part of the nomination pack:

On the form you will be asked to state that you are qualified and not disqualified from standing.

You must also state your date of birth.

You are not allowed to sign the consent form earlier than one calendar month before the deadline for submitting your nomination papers. [\[2\]](#)

Your signature must be witnessed and the witness must attest the form. [\[3\]](#)

The witness's full name and home address in full must be provided on the home address form.

There are no restrictions on who can be a witness to the consent to nomination. [\[4\]](#)

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 8(1)(a) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 8(1)(b) Sch 1 RPA 1983
4. Para 8(1)(b) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 22 December 2023

Home address form

The home address form must state: [\[1\]](#)

- your full name
- your home address in full

Your home address:

- must be completed in full
- must not contain abbreviations
- must be your current home address
- must not be a business address (unless you run a business from your home)

Choosing not to publish your home address

You may choose for your home address not to be published on the statement of persons nominated or the ballot paper.

In this case the home address form must contain, as well as your full name and home address:

- a statement, signed by you, which states that you require your home address not to be made public
- (for elections taking place before 2 May 2024) the name of the constituency in which your home address is situated (if your home address is in the UK)
- (for elections taking place on or after 2 May 2024) the UK Parliamentary constituency or the relevant area in which your home address is situated (if your home address is in the UK)
- if you live outside the UK, the name of the country in which your home address is situated

Your address does not need to be in the constituency in which you intend to stand.

If you act as your own election agent, unless you provide an office address, your home address as provided on the home address form will still be published on the notice of election agents. This is the case even where you have chosen to withhold your home address from the statement of persons nominated and ballot paper.

For elections taking place on or after 2 May 2024, the relevant area means:

For home addresses in England:

- if the address is within a district for which there is a district council, that district;
- if the address is within a county in which there are no districts with councils, that county;
- if the address is within a London borough, that London borough;
- if the address is within the City of London (including the Inner and Middle Temples), the City of London; and
- if the address is within the Isles of Scilly, the Isles of Scilly

For home addresses in Wales:

- if the address is within a county, that county;
- if the address is within a county borough, that county borough

For home addresses in Scotland:

- the local government area in which the address is situated

For home addresses in Northern Ireland:

- the local government district in which the address is situated

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Candidates standing on behalf of political parties

This section provides specific information for candidates standing on behalf of a political party on the additional information required to be submitted as part of their nomination papers.

To stand on behalf of a registered political party, the party must be registered on the Commission's register of political parties at <http://search.electoralcommission.org.uk> and be listed as allowed to field candidates in England (if you are standing for election in England), Wales (if you are standing for election in Wales) or Scotland (if you are standing for election in Scotland).

You will also need to submit a certificate of authorisation to be able to stand on behalf of that party. If you also wish to use an emblem of the party, you will also need to submit an emblem request form as part of your nomination.

The certificate of authorisation

Political parties authorise candidates to stand for them by issuing a certificate of authorisation. This must state that the named candidate can stand on their behalf and allow them to use one of the following: ^[1]

- the exact party name as registered with the Commission
- one of the party's registered descriptions
- your choice of either the registered party name or one of the registered descriptions

Particular care should be taken by the Nominating Officer (or someone authorised to act on their behalf) when completing the certificate of authorisation. If the certificate explicitly authorises a particular party name/description and this does not match the party name/description on the nomination paper, the whole nomination will be invalid. ^[2]

The certificate of authorisation must be signed by the registered Nominating Officer of the political party or by someone authorised by the Nominating Officer to act on their behalf and must be received by the (A)RO by the nominations deadline, 4pm, 19 working days before the poll. ^[3]

If you are standing on behalf of two or more parties, you will need a certificate of authorisation from the Nominating Officer of each of the registered parties (or people authorised to act on their behalf). ^[4] Joint descriptions are listed on the Commission's [register of political parties](#) on the registration page for the relevant parties.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 12(3A) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 6A(1) Sch 1 RPA 1983
4. Rule 6A(1B) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Request to use an emblem on the ballot paper

If you have been authorised by a political party to use the party name or a registered description on the ballot paper, you can also request that one of the party's official emblems is printed on the ballot paper next to your name. ^[1]

You must make the request for an emblem in writing and deliver it to the (A)RO. The request must be received by the (A)RO by 4pm, 19 working days before the poll. ^[2]

A party can register up to three emblems. You may want to check with your party (e.g. the nominating officer or someone authorised to act on their behalf) which emblem to use. Make sure you request a current emblem. Candidates standing on behalf of two or more registered parties and using a joint description can use an emblem that has been registered by one of the relevant parties. ^[3] The request must be made in writing and delivered to the (A)RO by the close of nominations, i.e. 4pm, 19 working days before the poll. ^[4] The (A)RO will supply you with a form you can use to make this request or, alternatively, you can use the emblem request form produced by the Commission.

The request should state both the name of the political party and the description of the emblem to be used, as listed on the Commission's [online register of political parties](#). Registered emblems cannot be varied in any way.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 19(2A) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 19(2AA) Sch 1 RPA 1983
4. Rule 19(2AA) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 22 December 2023

Submitting your nomination papers

It is your responsibility to ensure that your nomination papers, including the home address form and the consent to nomination, and where you are standing on behalf of a party, the certificate of authorisation and emblem request form, are delivered to the place specified on the notice of election by 4pm, 19 working days before the poll. ^[1] If you are appointing an election agent, you will also need to submit their appointment form by this deadline.

Only a limited number of persons may deliver your nomination form and home address form. The nomination form and home address form may only be delivered by yourself, your proposer or seconder, or by your election agent (if the (Acting) Returning Officer has previously received notification of their appointment). ^[2]

There are no restrictions on who can deliver your consent to nomination, certificate of authorisation and emblem request form, but we recommend that you, your agent, your proposer or seconder, or someone you trust delivers them, so you can be sure the consent is delivered to the (A)RO in time.

You should contact the (A)RO as soon as possible to find out what arrangements are in place for submitting nomination papers. You will be able to contact the (A)RO via your local elections office. Contact details can be obtained from our [website](#).

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 6(1) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

How must nomination papers be submitted?

The nomination form, the home address form and consent to nomination must be delivered by hand and cannot be submitted by post, e-mail or other electronic means. ^[1] The only exception to this is where a candidate is overseas, in which case their consent to nomination may be sent electronically.

The certificate of authorisation and the emblem request form may be submitted by post, but may not be submitted by fax, email or other electronic means. ^[2]

The original version of each completed paper must be submitted. ^[3]

For example, a certificate of authorisation which has been sent as an attachment to an email to be printed out would make it a 'copy document' and not the original document.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rules 6A(1) and 19(2)(b) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 6 Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

When must nomination papers be submitted?

You should submit your nomination papers as early as possible to give you sufficient time to submit new nomination papers should your first set contain any errors.

The (A)RO will confirm the exact details of when and where they can be delivered on the notice of election.

The notice of election will be published no later than 4pm on the second working day after the writ is received by the (A)RO. [\[1\]](#)

In most cases, the notice of election will be published on the local authority's website.

You can submit nomination papers between the hours of 10am and 4pm from the day after the publication of the notice of election until 4pm, 19 working days before the poll.

If, after you have submitted your nomination papers you change your mind and no longer want to stand for election, you can [withdraw](#), provided you do so by 4pm, 19 working days before the poll.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 11 January 2024

The deposit

For a candidate's nomination to be valid, the sum of £500 must be deposited with the (Acting) Returning Officer by the deadline for nominations, by 4pm, 19 working days before the poll. The deposit can be made using: [\[1\]](#)

- cash (British pounds only)
- a UK banker's draft

The (Acting) Returning Officer may also accept a deposit made by a building society cheque, a debit or credit card or an electronic funds transfer. However, they may refuse to do so. If you are considering paying the deposit in one of these ways, you should discuss with the (Acting) Returning Officer at the earliest opportunity whether the payment method is acceptable.

If the (Acting) Returning Officer allows the deposit to be paid by credit or debit card, there may be a fee charged by the bank or credit card company for the transaction, in which case you will be required to pay any additional fees as well as the £500 deposit.

Candidates who poll more than 5% of the total valid votes cast in the constituency will have their deposit returned. Those candidates who have polled less than, or equal to, 5% of the total valid votes cast will lose their deposit.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Withdrawing

You may withdraw as a candidate by signing and submitting a withdrawal notice, which must be witnessed by one other person. [\[1\]](#) There are no restrictions on who may submit the notice, but it must be delivered by hand. Your witness must also sign the notice. You can obtain a notice of withdrawal from the (A)RO or download it from our website.

If you are outside the UK and want to withdraw, your proposer can sign the withdrawal notice on your behalf. The withdrawal must be accompanied by a written declaration signed by your proposer confirming your absence.

If you are outside the UK and stand nominated by more than one nomination form, you should speak to the (A)RO if you wish to withdraw as special rules apply in this instance.

The withdrawal notice must be submitted by the deadline for withdrawals (i.e. by 4pm, 19 working days before the poll).

After the withdrawal deadline it is not possible to withdraw from the election, and your name will appear on the ballot paper. If the election is uncontested, you will be declared elected.

If you withdraw as a candidate, your deposit will be returned.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 8 January 2024

What happens after the close of nominations

Provided no objections have been made, the (A)RO will publish a statement of persons nominated by 5pm, 19 working days before the poll. [\[1\]](#)

The statement will include: [\[2\]](#)

- the full or commonly used names, as the case may be, of all candidates validly nominated
- the names of candidates who no longer stand nominated, if any (i.e. invalid and withdrawn candidates), with the reason why they are no longer standing
- the address of each candidate, or if they have requested not to make their home address public, the constituency in which their home address is situated (or the country if their home address is situated outside the UK)
- each candidate's description (if any)

If objections have been made, the (Acting) Returning Officer will publish the statement of persons nominated by 4pm on the day after the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers, i.e. by 4pm, 18 working days before the poll. [\[3\]](#)

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 14 Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 1(b) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Inspecting the other candidates' nomination papers

Only certain people are entitled to attend the delivery of nomination papers and to inspect and make any objections to the validity of a nomination form or home address form. After your nomination papers and deposit have been delivered and you stand validly nominated, the following can inspect and make objections to a nomination form or home address form: [\[1\]](#)

- you
- your election agent (or, if you are your own agent, any person nominated by you)
- your proposer or seconder (if you have submitted more than one nomination form, only the proposer and seconder from the nomination form you have selected will be entitled to attend. If none have been selected, it will be the proposer and seconder of the first submitted nomination form who will have that entitlement)

Nomination papers cannot be inspected by anybody else at any time.

Electoral Commission representatives and one other person chosen by a validly nominated candidate can also be present at the delivery of nomination papers, but they are not allowed to inspect or make any objections to nomination papers.

No other person, except the (Acting) Returning Officer and their staff, may attend the delivery of nomination papers.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Objections to nominations

Objections to the validity of any nomination form or home address form can be made, in most circumstances, on the last day for the delivery of nomination papers, i.e. 19 working days before the poll. [\[1\]](#)

In one exceptional circumstance, where the objection is on the grounds that a candidate is disqualified because they are serving a prison sentence of a year or more, objections can be made 18 working days before the poll.

The time within which an objection can be made depends on when the nomination papers are delivered.

Timetable for objections [\[2\]](#)

Nominations delivered up to 4pm on the day before the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers

Objections to any nomination form or home address form delivered up to and including 4pm on the day before the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers must be made between 10am and 12 noon on the last day for the delivery of nomination papers.

Nominations delivered after 4pm on the day before the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers

Objections to any nomination form delivered after 4pm on the day before the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers must be made between 10am and 5pm on the last day for the delivery of nomination papers. Any objection must be made at or immediately after the time of the delivery of the nomination.

Objections on the grounds that a candidate is imprisoned for a year or more

In the rare case that the (Acting) Returning Officer considers that a candidate may be disqualified because they are imprisoned and serving a sentence of a year or more, they will publish a notice inviting objections on those grounds. Any such objection may be made between 10am and 4pm on the next working day following the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers.

Decisions on objections ^[3]

The (Acting) Returning Officer will consider any objections made, but is entitled to hold a nomination invalid only on the following grounds:

- that the particulars of the candidate or subscribers are not as required by law
- that the paper is not subscribed as required
- that the candidate is disqualified on the grounds that they are imprisoned and serving a sentence of a year or more

The (Acting) Returning Officer's decision that a nomination is valid is final and cannot be challenged during the election. The decision can only be challenged after an election through an [election petition](#).

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 1 Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 12 Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 11 January 2024

Will the election be contested or uncontested?

The election is uncontested if either:

- only one valid nomination is received
- all valid nominations are properly withdrawn by the deadline except one

If the election is uncontested, the (A)RO will declare the one validly nominated candidate to be elected as soon as possible and will give public notice of the name of those declared elected.

Even if the election is uncontested, elected candidates must still make a declaration as to their election spending. You can find more information in our guidance about [submitting spending returns](#) and [taking up office](#) in our guidance.

Death of a candidate

The impact of the death of a candidate before the declaration of the result depends on whether or not the deceased candidate was standing on behalf of a registered political party.

It is the time at which the (Acting) Returning Officer receives proof of the candidate's death that is the relevant factor, not the actual time of death.

Death of an independent candidate ^[1]

If an independent candidate dies, the election continues as normal. If the deceased candidate receives the most votes, they are not elected and the election is re-run. No new nominations are required: all of the existing candidates remain nominated for the new election and retention or return of the deposit is determined by the re-run election result. No new nominations are allowed for the re-run election, although candidates may withdraw.

If the independent candidate who died did not receive the most votes at the original poll, the candidate who did is declared elected and the election is not affected. If the candidate who died came joint first with the same number of votes as any other candidate, the other candidate is declared elected.

If only two persons are standing nominated and an independent candidate dies, the election is treated as an uncontested election and the other candidate is declared elected.

In all circumstances, the deposit of the deceased candidate will be returned

Death of a party candidate ^[2]

If the (Acting) Returning Officer receives proof and is satisfied before the declaration of result that a candidate standing on behalf of a political party (or as a joint candidate standing on behalf of two or more parties) has died, the election is stopped immediately. If the poll is under way or the count is being undertaken, that process stops. There will be a new election.

No new nominations are required: all the existing candidates remain nominated for the new election and retention or return of the deposit is determined by the result at the new election. No new nominations are allowed for the new election, except that a new candidate can be nominated to stand on behalf of the same party (or parties) of the candidate who died. Any existing candidates may withdraw by the deadline for withdrawals for the new election. The nomination papers for the candidate standing for the party (or parties) whose candidate died must be submitted by the close of nominations based on the new timetable.

Death of the Speaker of the House of Commons ^[3]

If the (Acting) Returning Officer receives proof and is satisfied before the declaration of result that a candidate who was the Speaker of the House of Commons seeking re-election has died, the election is stopped immediately. If the poll is under way or the count is being undertaken, that process stops. There will be a new election.

In the case of the death of the Speaker new nominations are allowed for the new election, and these must be submitted in the usual way and by the deadline for nominations based on the new timetable.

New election

The timetable for any new election will be prepared as if the writ was received seven working days after the proof of the death was received by the (Acting) Returning Officer. The (Acting) Returning Officer will set a new polling day and provide you with details of the new election timetable.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 63 Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 64 Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Postal votes

The following sections provide guidance on postal voting and the processes involved.

The guidance covers:

- Who can apply to vote by post
- What is contained in postal ballot packs
- The opening of postal votes and who can attend
- The postal vote opening process
- The appointment of postal voting agents and their role

The guidance also covers your duty to maintain secrecy during postal vote opening sessions.

The Elections Act 2022 has introduced specific restrictions regarding the handling of postal votes. This new legislation will be in force for the scheduled polls in May 2024. You will need to make sure your supporters are aware that it is an offence to handle completed ballot papers or postal ballot packs for voters who are not close family or someone they care for and to follow the [Code of conduct for campaigners in Great Britain](#).

Last updated: 20 December 2023

Who can apply to vote by post?

The following can apply to vote by post in UK Parliamentary elections by submitting an application to their Electoral Registration Officer (ERO):

- a person aged 18 or over who is registered to vote
- a person aged 18 or over who or has applied to be registered to vote
- a person who has been appointed to vote as a proxy on behalf of someone else

The application must be received by the ERO by 5pm, 11 working days before the poll. [\[1\]](#)

The ERO has no discretion to extend the deadline for whatever reason.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Last updated: 8 January 2024

Postal ballot packs

Postal ballot packs will be sent to electors from around two weeks before polling day.

Electors who registered close to the registration deadline and have applied for a postal vote close to or at the same time, will be issued with their postal ballot packs only once their postal vote application has been determined, even if their names have been added to the final register update on the fifth working day.

Electors will then mark their ballot paper, complete the postal voting statement by providing their signature and date of birth, and return them to the (Acting) Returning Officer before the close of poll (i.e. 10pm on polling day).

Candidates, election agents and postal voting agents are not entitled to attend the issue of postal votes.

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What does the postal ballot pack contain?

Postal ballot packs contain the following:

- envelope A is the envelope that the elector returns their ballot paper in. It is marked with the letter 'A' and the words 'ballot paper envelope'
- envelope B is the envelope that the elector will use to return the ballot paper envelope and the postal voting statement. It is marked with the letter 'B' and the address of the (Acting) Returning Officer
- the postal voting statement contains the elector's name, the number of the ballot paper issued to them, instructions on how to vote by post and space for the elector to sign and provide their date of birth
- the ballot paper

If the election is combined with another poll, the (Acting) Returning Officer may have decided to combine the issue of postal votes.

In that case, the postal ballot pack will also contain the ballot paper for the other electoral event(s).

Last updated: 4 December 2023

The opening of postal votes

Who can attend the opening of postal votes

The following people are entitled to attend the opening of returned postal votes:

- you
- your election agent or a person appointed by you to attend in their place. [\[1\]](#)
- agents you have appointed to attend openings on your behalf. [\[2\]](#) For details on how to appoint these agents see [Appointing postal voting agents](#).

Duty to maintain secrecy during postal vote opening sessions

Ballot papers will be kept face down throughout a postal vote opening session. [\[3\]](#) Anyone attending an opening session has a duty to maintain secrecy and must not:

- obtain
- attempt to obtain
- communicate at any time to another person
 - any information relating to the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of a ballot paper [\[4\]](#)
 - any information as to the official mark on a postal ballot paper before the close of poll [\[5\]](#)
- disclose how any particular ballot paper has been marked or pass on any such information gained from the session.

It follows therefore that keeping a tally of how ballot papers have been marked is not allowed.

Anyone found guilty of breaching these requirements can face a fine, or may be imprisoned for up to six months. In England and Wales, the fine is unlimited; in Scotland, it is up to £5,000. [\[6\]](#)

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Reg 69 RPR (E&W) 2001, reg 69 RPR (S) 2001
3. Reg 84(6) RPR (E&W) 2001, reg 84(5) RPR (S) 2001
4. Section 66 (3A)(a) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
5. S.66 (3A)(b) and (4)(a) RPA 1983
6. S.66 (6) RPA 1983

Last updated: 11 January 2024

Appointing postal voting agents

You may appoint agents to attend postal vote openings.

Anyone, apart from the following people listed below, can be appointed as a postal vote agent:

- the (Acting) Returning Officer or a member of their staff
- a partner or clerk of the (Acting) Returning Officer or a member of their staff
- anyone not entitled to vote at the election as a result of the report of an election court or a conviction for a corrupt or illegal practice under the Representation of the People Act 1983

You and your election agent can automatically act as one of these agents without the need of an official appointment. [\[1\]](#)

The (Acting) Returning Officer will tell you the maximum number of postal voting agents you can appoint. [\[2\]](#) All candidates will be allowed to appoint exactly the same number.

The request to appoint postal voting agents must be made in writing to the (Acting) Returning Officer. The request must contain the names and addresses of the people being appointed. [\[3\]](#)

The (Acting) Returning Officer will provide forms you can use for this, or you can use the Commission's postal voting agent appointment form.

Appointment forms for postal voting agents need to be submitted to the (Acting) Returning Officer by the time fixed for the opening of postal votes they want to attend.

The (Acting) Returning Officer will give you at least 48 hours' notice before the scheduled start of each postal vote opening session. [\[4\]](#)

If an agent dies or becomes incapable of acting, you may appoint another agent in their place by submitting the relevant appointment form to the (Acting) Returning Officer. [\[5\]](#) Any new

appointment in these circumstances must be made without delay.

More information on what postal voting agents can and cannot do and what they can expect to see at postal vote opening sessions can be found in our guidance [what does a postal voting agent do](#) and [the stages of the postal vote opening process](#).

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Reg. 69(1) RPR (E&W) 2001, reg. 69(1) RPR (S) 2001
3. Reg. 69 RPR (E&W) 2001, reg. 69 RPR (S) 2001
4. Reg. 80 (RPR (E&W) 2001), reg. 80 (RPR (S) 2001)
5. Reg. 69(4) (RPR (E&W) 2001), reg. 69(4) (RPR (S) 2001)

Last updated: 12 February 2024

What does a postal voting agent do?

A postal voting agent is allowed to attend and observe postal vote opening sessions, which are run by the (Acting) Returning Officer.

At each opening session the (Acting) Returning Officer will decide whether or not the date of birth and signature provided by electors on their postal voting statements match the signature and date of birth previously provided and held on their records. If there is a mismatch, the postal vote will be rejected.

A postal voting agent has a right to observe, but not to interfere with this process. A postal voting agent can, however, object to the decision of a (Acting) Returning Officer to reject a postal vote. ^[1]

It will not affect the (Acting) Returning Officer's decision, but the (Acting) Returning Officer will record any objections by marking the postal voting statement with the words 'rejection objected to'.

Like your postal voting agents, you, your election agent and the person you may have appointed to attend on your election agent's behalf are also entitled to object to a rejection.

The (Acting) Returning Officer will explain the postal vote opening process to you and may issue you with information on the procedures to be followed, including instructions on what you can and cannot do at the session. You should comply with any instructions that the (Acting) Returning Officer has given.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

When are the postal votes opened and how will you know when an opening session is taking place?

It is likely that several opening sessions will take place before polling day, as well as on polling day itself.

The (Acting) Returning Officer must:

- give candidates at least 48 hours' notice of when and where the sessions will take place [\[1\]](#)
- set out how many postal voting agents will be allowed to attend each session

There will be a final opening session after the polls have closed to open any postal votes handed in to polling stations. This session may be held at the count venue or in another location. The (Acting) Returning Officer will advise you of the location for the final opening.

For more information on the process carried out at the opening of postal votes see [Stages of the postal vote opening process](#).

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Stages of the postal vote opening process

The stages of the postal vote opening process can be summarised as follows:

Stage	Process
1	Postal votes are brought to the opening session in ballot boxes
2	The covering envelopes (envelope B) are taken out and counted

Stage	Process
3	The total number of covering envelopes is recorded
4	Covering envelopes (envelope B) are divided between teams of opening staff
5	Staff open each covering envelope (envelope B) and remove the postal voting statement and the sealed ballot paper envelope (envelope A)
6	Staff check that the number on the postal voting statement matches the number on envelope A
7	If the numbers match, staff check that the elector has provided a signature and a date of birth (without checking that they are the elector's at this stage)
	Postal voting statements without a signature and date of birth cause the postal vote to be rejected
8	If the statement or ballot paper envelope is missing, or the numbers on the statement and ballot paper envelope do not match, the document(s) are set aside, recorded and stored in secure packets
9	The (Acting) Returning Officer must verify the dates of birth and signatures provided on the statements
10	The (Acting) Returning Officer must be satisfied that the dates of birth and Signatures on the statements match those previously held on record
11	Following verification of the signatures and dates of birth, postal voting statements are removed from the tables

Stage	Process
12	Staff open the ballot paper envelopes (envelope A) and remove the ballot paper
13	Staff check that the number on the back of the ballot paper matches the number on the ballot paper envelope (envelope A)
14	Valid ballot papers (not votes) are counted and the total number is recorded
15	All valid ballot papers are place into ballot boxes and stored before being delivered to the count venue for counting after the close of poll

Matching up postal voting statements with postal ballot papers

The (A)RO will keep lists of any provisionally rejected postal ballot papers which are: [\[1\]](#)

- any postal ballot papers that have been returned without a postal voting statement
- any postal voting statements that are not returned with the ballot paper

The (A)RO will check these lists regularly to ensure that if any mismatched documents can be matched up, those postal ballots they are re-introduced into the process. [\[2\]](#)

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Reg. 88 RPR(E&W) 2001, reg. 88 RPR(S) 2001

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Invalid and rejected postal voting statements

Valid ballot papers are those ballot papers whose related postal voting statement has passed the signature and date of birth checks.

A very small number of voters do not need to sign their postal voting statement. These voters will have been granted a waiver because they are unable to sign or provide a consistent signature due to a disability or an inability to read or write. The postal voting statement sent to such electors will make this clear.

Invalid ballot papers are set aside and stored in secure packets.

Unless a waiver has been granted, the (Acting) Returning Officer will reject a postal voting statement if a signature and/or date of birth is missing or if a signature and/or date of birth does not match that previously provided by the elector and held on record.

Rejected statements are attached to the relevant ballot paper or ballot paper envelope. They are marked as 'rejected' and shown to any agents present.

Agents can object to the (Acting) Returning Officer's decision to reject any postal vote and, if they do, the words 'rejection objected to' are added to it. However, the (Acting) Returning Officer's decision is final and the postal vote will remain rejected.

For polls on or after 2 May 2024 - Postal voting documents handed in or left with the Returning Officer that have been rejected

The Elections Act 2022 has introduced specific restrictions regarding the handing in of postal votes to polling stations or handing in to the Returning Officer. This new legislation will be in force for polls held on or after 2 May 2024.

If postal voting documents are not delivered as required when they are handed in to a polling station or handed in to the Returning Officer, they will be rejected. You may see these rejected postal votes sealed up with a description of its contents written on each packet.

This guidance will be updated with the postal vote handling measures from the Elections Act once the relevant secondary legislation has been laid and processes have been finalised.

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Polling day

Polling day is the day on which polling stations will open and electors will visit them to cast their votes in person. It is also the last day that (Acting) Returning Officers can accept returned postal votes. Polling day is sometimes called "election day".

The guidance covers:

- polling station locations and the voting process
- who can support you on polling day (including polling agents and tellers)
- polling day dos and don'ts for you and your campaigners
- what happens after polls close

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Polling stations

You and your election agent are entitled to observe proceedings inside polling stations. [\[1\]](#) Additionally, you may appoint agents to attend polling stations on your behalf. [\[2\]](#) For more details please see our guidance on appointing polling agents.

Finding the location of polling stations

The (Acting) Returning Officer will give public notice of the location of polling stations after the deadline for delivery of nomination papers. [\[3\]](#) They will give a copy of this notice to all appointed election agents soon after this.

Polling station opening hours

Polling stations will be open on polling day between 7am and 10pm. Any voters waiting in a queue at their polling station at 10pm will be allowed to vote, even if they haven't yet been issued with a ballot paper.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 30(1)(a) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 23 Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 28 December 2023

Who can vote at polling stations?

Most people choose to vote in person at their polling station. Any person on the polling station's electoral register can vote at the polling station in a UK Parliamentary election, unless:

- they are a registered postal voter
- they are a registered proxy voter and their proxy has already voted for them or has applied to vote on their behalf by post
- they are not 18 years of age or older on polling day
- they are a peer in the House of Lords
- they are an EU citizen (except for citizens from the Republic of Ireland, Cyprus and Malta, who are entitled to vote at a UK Parliamentary election)
- they are a qualifying foreign citizen in Wales
- they are a qualifying foreign national or prisoner serving a sentence of 12 months or less in Scotland

Electors will receive a poll card before the election telling them where and when they can vote. Electors do not need to take their poll card to the polling station in order to vote, unless they are registered anonymously due to a risk to their safety.

Photographic ID requirements

Electors voting in a polling station will be required to show photographic ID before they are issued with a ballot paper. The accepted forms of photographic ID are:

- a passport issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, a British Overseas Territory, an EEA state, or a Commonwealth country (including an Irish Passport Card)
- a driving licence issued by the UK, any of the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, or an EEA state
- a biometric immigration document
- an identity card bearing the Proof of Age Standards Scheme hologram (a PASS card)
- a Ministry of Defence Form 90 (Defence Identity Card)
- a Blue Badge
- a national identity card issued by an EEA state
- an Older Person's Bus Pass funded by the UK Government
- a Disabled Person's Bus Pass funded by the UK Government
- an Oyster 60+ Card funded by the UK Government
- a Freedom Pass
- a Scottish National Entitlement Card for the purpose of concessionary travel
- a 60 and Over Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- a Disabled Person's Welsh Concessionary Travel Card
- a Senior SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- a Registered Blind SmartPass or Blind Person's SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- a War Disablement SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- a 60+ SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- a Half Fare SmartPass issued in Northern Ireland
- an Electoral Identity Card issued in Northern Ireland

Expired photographic ID documents can still be used as accepted photographic ID at the polling station, as long as the photograph is still a good likeness of the elector.

Where an elector does not have one of the accepted forms of photographic ID, they can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate in a number of ways:

- online at www.gov.uk/apply-for-photo-id-voter-authority-certificate
- in writing on a paper application form
- in person, if the Electoral Registration Officer is offering this service at their office

Anonymous electors wishing to vote in person will be required to apply for an Anonymous Elector's Document. An application for an Anonymous Elector's document can only be made in writing, using a paper application form. Your local Electoral Registration Officer will be able to provide the elector with this form on request. The application form can then be returned to the Electoral Registration Officer by the elector by post, by hand or by emailing a scanned copy.

Candidates and agents should not handle completed applications for Voter Authority Certificates or Anonymous Elector's Documents. Further information is provided in our [code of conduct for campaigners in Great Britain](#).

Return of postal ballot packs

Registered postal voters cannot be issued with a ballot paper at the polling station, but they can return their completed postal ballot pack to their polling station on polling day. Alternatively, they may return their postal vote to any polling station in the constituency or by hand to the (Acting) Returning Officer at the elections office.

If the (Acting) Returning Officer has issued postal ballot packs for more than one election on the same day, they will provide information to the electors to explain where their postal ballot packs can be returned to.

Postal ballot packs returned to polling stations must be handed to polling station staff and not placed in the ballot box.

FOR POLLS HELD ON OR AFTER 2 MAY 2024

The Elections Act 2022 introduced legislation which restricts the handling of postal voting documents by campaigners. The legislation will be in force for polls held on or after 2 May 2024. It is an offence for a political campaigner to handle completed ballot papers or postal ballot packs for voters who are not close family or someone they care for.

It also sets a limit for the number of postal votes that can be handed in to a polling station or handed to the Returning Officer and introduces a requirement the completion of a form when doing so.

A person can hand in postal votes on behalf of five other electors as well as their own.

A person who hands in a postal vote is required to complete a form containing information required by law. Failure to complete the form will result in the rejection of the postal votes that are handed in at a polling station or handed to the Returning Officer.

What is the normal voting process

The voting process can be summarised as follows.

Polling station staff will:

- ask voters for their name and address before making sure that they are eligible to vote by checking against the register of electors
- ask the voter to produce their photographic ID
- verify the photographic ID
- mark a straight line against the voter's entry on the register of electors
- call out the name and electoral number of the elector
- write the elector number on a list (the Corresponding Numbers List) next to the number of the ballot paper to be issued
- ensure that the ballot paper includes the official mark (e.g. a barcode or watermark)
- fold the ballot paper and then hand it unfolded to the elector so that they can see all of the options on the ballot paper

The elector will then:

- take the ballot paper to the polling booth, and
- mark the ballot paper in private, unless assisted by a companion or the Presiding Officer
- fold the marked ballot paper and show the ballot paper number and unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper to the Presiding Officer
- place the ballot paper into the ballot box and then leave the polling station

The polling station will have facilities for any voter who wishes to have their ID checked in private.

Where the voter does not bring ID or brings an incorrect form of ID, the voter will be able to return to the polling station with an acceptable form of photographic ID. Once an acceptable form of ID is shown, the voter will be issued with a ballot paper.

Where the election has been combined with another electoral event, polling station staff will be issuing the ballot papers for all electoral events that the voter is eligible to vote at.

This means that sometimes electors may not be receiving all of the ballot papers being issued in the polling station, as they may not be entitled to vote at every electoral event.

If polls have been combined, a single ballot box may be used for all contests, or separate ballot boxes may be used for each separate contest.

Accessibility in polling stations

The Returning Officer has a responsibility to ensure that voting is accessible. They must provide each polling station with a range of equipment as is reasonable for the purposes of enabling or making it easier for disabled voters to vote independently and in secret.

The Presiding Officer can assist anyone who is unable to mark the ballot paper themselves. ^[1] Alternatively, a voter may bring along someone they know and trust to assist them in marking their vote. ^[2] The person assisting the voter must be aged 18 or over, and can only assist a maximum of two voters at the election.

Any person attending the polling station to assist an elector must complete a declaration to the Presiding Officer before they aid the elector in the polling booth.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001
2. Rule 39 Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Collection of postal ballots from the polling station

The (Acting) Returning Officer may arrange for the collection of any postal votes that electors have handed in at polling stations throughout polling day. The Presiding Officer must seal any returned postal votes in a packet before they are collected. Any of your agents present can add their own seal to the packet if they wish.

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What happens after polls close

Once all voters who have been issued with a ballot paper have voted, the ballot box is sealed by the Presiding Officer and polling agents can add their own seal if they wish. ^[1] After the Presiding Officer has completed all of the paperwork, the sealed ballot box is taken to the count venue.

1. Regulation 108 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, regulation 107 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001

Who can support you on polling day

On polling day, you may be supported by campaigners, polling agents, and you may also intend to use tellers.

This section sets out more information about:

- polling agents and how to appoint them
- the role of tellers
- the requirement to maintain the secrecy of the ballot
- dos and don'ts for candidates and their supporters on polling day

Polling agents

You may appoint people as agents to attend the polling stations. [\[1\]](#)

What does a polling agent do?

While a polling agent can observe the poll, they do not have to be present in a polling station for polling and related procedures to take place. Polling agents have a number of important roles to play on polling day. They can:

- be present in the polling station before the opening of the poll to watch the Presiding Officer show the empty ballot box before it is sealed.
- detect personation and prevent people voting more than once in the election (other than as proxies). Personation is when an individual votes as someone else, whether that person is living, dead or fictitious.
- be present when the Presiding Officer marks a ballot paper at the request of an elector who needs assistance marking a ballot paper because of a disability or an inability to read or write report to you or your election agent any improper activities and keep notes, if required, for giving evidence in court.
- be present at the close of poll when the various packets of documents are sealed
- attach their seal to any packets made up by the Presiding Officer at the close of poll, including the ballot box. Polling agents' seals cannot be attached to ballot boxes at the start of, or during, the poll.

You and your election agent can also do anything that a polling agent is entitled to do. [\[2\]](#)

1. Rule 30(1) and (5) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act (RPA 1983)
2. Rule 30(8)-(9) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 January 2024

Appointing polling agents

Anyone can be appointed as a polling agent, provided that they are not:

- the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO or a member of their staff
- a partner or clerk of the (A)RO or a member of their staff
- anyone not entitled to vote at the election as a result of the report of an election court or a conviction for a corrupt or illegal practice under the Representation of the People Act 1983

Both you and your election agent can also automatically act as one of those agents without the need of an official appointment. [\[1\]](#)

You can appoint any number of polling agents to attend each polling station, but only one polling agent for each candidate can be present in a polling station at any time. [\[2\]](#) A polling agent can be appointed to attend multiple polling stations. Your right to attend will remain unaffected by this.

Polling agents must be appointed by not later than the fifth working day before the poll. [\[3\]](#) The request to appoint polling agents must be made in writing to the (A)RO. [\[4\]](#) It must contain the names and addresses of the people being appointed. The (A)RO will provide forms you can use for this, or you can use the Commission's polling agent appointment form.

If an agent dies or becomes incapable of acting, you may appoint another agent in their place by submitting the relevant appointment form to the (A)RO. [\[5\]](#) Any new appointment in these circumstances must be made without delay.

1. Rule 30(8) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Rule 32(2) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 30(3) Sch 1 RPA 1983
4. Rule 30 Sch 1 RPA 1983
5. Rule 30(4) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 8 January 2024

Tellers

Tellers are people who stand outside polling places and record the elector numbers of electors who have voted. They can then identify likely supporters who have not voted and encourage them to vote before the close of poll.

Tellers have no legal status and voters can refuse to give information to them. The (Acting) Returning Officer is in charge of the conduct of the election. If they are concerned by the activities of tellers, they can ask tellers to comply with agreed behaviour or leave the polling place.

We have produced a factsheet of tellers' dos and don'ts, as well as more comprehensive guidance on the activities of tellers. The guidance aims to ensure that everyone knows precisely what is and is not acceptable and is designed to promote appropriate standards of conduct. The (Acting) Returning Officer may also provide their own version of guidance to tellers.

Last updated: 7 March 2024

Maintaining the secrecy of the ballot

Anyone attending a polling station has a duty to maintain the secrecy of the ballot. ^[1] In particular, the following information must not be disclosed:

- the name or electoral number of who has or has not voted
- the number or other unique identifying mark on the ballot paper

Anyone attending a polling station must also not try to ascertain how a voter has voted or who they are about to vote for.

A polling agent can mark off on their copy of the register of electors those voters who have applied for ballot papers. If the polling agent leaves the polling station during the hours of polling, they must leave the marked copy of the register in the polling station to ensure that secrecy requirements are not breached.

Any person found guilty of breaching the secrecy requirements can face a fine or imprisonment. In England and Wales, the fine is unlimited; in Scotland, it is up to £5,000. You can find a copy of the secrecy requirements here:

1. Section 66 Representation of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Polling day dos and don'ts

You should:

- Make sure that any tellers working for you follow our tellers' dos and don'ts and any guidance issued by the (Acting) Returning Officer.
- Make sure your campaigners follow the [Code of conduct for campaigners in Great Britain](#) which sets out what is, and is not, considered acceptable behaviour at polling stations and in the community.
- Comply with requests by polling station staff or the Returning Officer about campaigning near polling stations. You should, however, be allowed to put your message to voters on polling day, including in public spaces outside polling places.
- Make sure that any agents who are attending polling stations, postal vote opening sessions or the count understand the rules about the secrecy of the ballot. For more information, see our documents setting out the secrecy requirements for the poll, postal voting and the count.
- For candidates in Wales, we have also produced the secrecy requirements for postal voting, the poll and the count bi-lingually in English and Welsh.

You must not:

- Campaign near polling stations in a way that could be seen by voters as aggressive or intimidating (for example, large groups of supporters carrying banners, or vehicles with loudspeakers or heavily branded with campaign material).
- Breach the requirements on secrecy of the ballot. [\[1\]](#) This is an essential part of any modern democracy and breaches are taken seriously.
- Seek to identify and publicise how votes have been marked on individual ballot papers, particularly if you (or your agents) attend postal vote opening sessions.
- Publish exit polls or any other data based on information given by people about how they voted after they have cast their vote, including a postal vote, before the close of poll. [\[2\]](#)

1. Section 66 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.66A RPA 1983

Last updated: 20 December 2023

Verification and count

The following sections provide guidance on the process of verifying and counting the votes in the election. As a candidate you will be invited to attend and observe these processes.

It includes guidance on the following:

- when and where the count will take place
- who can attend the count
- what does a counting agent do?
- duty to maintain secrecy
- how votes are counted
- what if the vote on a ballot paper is not clear?
- doubtful ballot papers
- declaration of result

Last updated: 29 November 2023

When and where will count take place

All (Acting) Returning Officers must take reasonable steps to have completed verification and begun counting the votes as soon as practicable within four hours of the close of poll.

Where this doesn't happen in practice – for example, as a result of higher-than-expected turnout levels, queues in polling stations at close of poll, the combination of the UK Parliamentary election with other polls, or the particular geography of a constituency, (Acting) Returning Officers must report this to the Commission.

While it is important that a count is timely, it is also important that the count produces an accurate result that everyone can have confidence in.

The (Acting) Returning Officer will notify you of the exact time and location and will request that you provide a list of who will be attending with you. See our guidance on [who can attend the count](#) and [appointing counting agents](#) for more information.

The Returning Officer will issue instructions or an invitation with any requirements they have in place for attendance which you should ensure are followed by yourself and anyone else attending with you.

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Who can attend the count?

You and your election agent are entitled to observe the count. ^[1]

Additionally, you can invite one other person to attend, this person is in attendance as your guest, they have no powers or functions.

You may also appoint agents to attend the count on your behalf. [\[2\]](#)

1. Rule 44(2) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Rule 30 Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What does a counting agent do?

Counting agents have a number of important roles to play at the count:

- they observe the counting process and make sure that it is accurate
- they can draw to the attention of count staff any doubtful ballot papers
- if they disagree with a decision by the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) to reject a ballot paper, they can ask the (A)RO to mark on the ballot paper “rejection objected to”
- if a count is suspended for any reason, counting agents can add their seals when the (Acting) Returning Officer seals the ballot boxes and envelopes

You and your election agent can do anything a counting agent is allowed to do.

Last updated: 8 January 2024

Appointing your counting agents

You may appoint other people as agents to attend the count. [\[1\]](#)

Anyone, apart from those listed below can be appointed as a counting agent.

The following people are not allowed to be counting agents:

- the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) or a member of their staff
- a partner or clerk of the (A)RO or a member of their staff
- anyone not entitled to vote at the election as a result of the report of an election court or a conviction for a corrupt or illegal practice under the Representation of the People Act 1983

Both you and your election agent can also automatically act as one of those agents without the need of an official appointment. [2] The (A)RO will tell you the maximum number of counting agents you can appoint.

All candidates will be allowed to appoint exactly the same number.

At the count, unless there are special circumstances, the number of counting agents allowed for each candidate will not be less than the number obtained by dividing the number of counting assistants (i.e. those staff employed on the counting) by the number of candidates. [3]

The request to appoint these agents must be made in writing to the (A)RO. [4] It must contain the names and addresses of the people being appointed. The (A)RO will provide forms you can use for this, or you can find counting agent appointment forms on the Commission's website.

The deadline for appointing counting agents is by no later than the fifth working day before the poll. [5]

If an agent dies or becomes incapable of acting, you may appoint another agent in their place by submitting the relevant appointment form to the (A)RO. [6] Any new appointment in these circumstances must be made without delay.

For more information on what agents can and cannot do and what they can expect to see at the count, guidance can be found in [What does a counting agent do?](#)

1. Rule 30(1) and (5) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Rule 30(8)-(9) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Rule 30 Sch 1 RPA 1983
4. Rule 30(3) Sch 1 RPA 1983
5. Rule 30(3) Sch 1 RPA 1983
6. Rule 30(4) Sch 1 RPA 1983

Last updated: 11 January 2024

Duty to maintain secrecy

Anyone attending the count has a duty to maintain the secrecy of the count. In particular, anyone attending must not: [1]

- ascertain or attempt to ascertain number or other unique identifying mark on the back of any ballot paper
- communicate any information obtained at the count as to the candidate for whom any vote is given on any particular ballot paper

1. Section 66 Representation of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

How the votes will be counted

Stage 1 - Check in

The (Acting) Returning Officer's ((A)RO)'s staff will deliver the ballot boxes from the polling station to the count venue.

The (A)RO's staff check in the ballot boxes as they arrive at the count venue.

Stage 2 - Verification

Ballot boxes are emptied onto tables and the empty boxes are shown to agents.

Staff count the ballot papers from each polling station.

Staff verify that the number of ballot papers matches the number of papers issued, as recorded on the Presiding Officers' ballot paper accounts.

The verified ballot papers are shown to election and counting agents face up.

The (Acting) Returning Officer determines the reasons for any discrepancies and produces a final verified total.

The (A)RO produces a statement of the verification. Agents can view or copy this statement if they wish.

In England and Wales, where the election has been combined with another electoral event, the (A)RO may decide to start counting the votes before verification of all ballot papers for all polls is complete. However, they can only announce the result of the UK Parliamentary general election for their constituency once the verification of all ballot papers is completed.

In Scotland, where the election is combined with another poll, the verification of all ballot papers for all polls must be completed before the counting of the UK Parliamentary general election votes can begin.

There may be a single ballot box for all elections or separate boxes for each. In any case, ballot papers will be sorted into the separate contests.

Any ballot paper found in the 'wrong' ballot box is still valid and will be moved to the correct box during verification.

If the UK Parliamentary election is combined with other polls and the count for those polls does not take place immediately following verification, the verified boxes will be stored securely. Candidates and agents can attach their seals to boxes if they wish.

Stage 3- Counting of the votes

Staff sort ballot papers by candidate.

Staff count the number of votes cast for each candidate.

The (A)RO will share the provisional result with you and the agents. You or your election agent can ask the (A)RO to recount the votes.

The (A)RO can refuse to recount if they think the request is unreasonable.

Last updated: 8 January 2024

What if the vote on a ballot paper is not clear?

A ballot paper will not be counted if it:

- is unmarked
- does not contain the official mark
- contains votes for more than one candidate
- contains any mark or writing that can identify the voter
- does not indicate the voter's intention with certainty

The (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) must draw up a statement showing the number of ballot papers rejected for these reasons.

The (A)RO must mark the word "rejected" on any ballot paper that is rejected. They must add the words "rejection objected to" if a counting agent objects to the (A)RO's decision.

If the voter's intention is clear on a ballot paper and the voter cannot be identified by any mark or writing, it will not be void if a vote is marked:

- elsewhere than in the proper place
- by other means than a cross (e.g. a tick)
- by more than one mark

For more details on the adjudication of doubtful ballot papers, see our guidance below.

Doubtful ballot papers

To assist (A)ROs, we have produced guidance on how to adjudicate votes on ballot papers that may appear doubtful. This guidance is contained in our booklet *Dealing with doubtful ballot papers*, we have also produced a doubtful ballot paper placemat which (A)ROs may refer to at the count.

The examples given in these documents are based on the election rules.

Please note that while these documents provide guidance for (A)ROs, each individual (A)RO has the ultimate responsibility for making a decision on individual ballot papers. Their decision to reject a particular ballot paper during the count or recount is final and can be reviewed only at an election petition after the declaration of the result. For more details see our [guidance on election petitions](#).

Last updated: 9 January 2024

Equality of votes

If two or more candidates have the same number of votes, and a further vote for either would see the candidate elected, the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO must decide between them by drawing lots.

The (A)RO will decide the method of drawing lots.

Last updated: 8 January 2024

Declaration of result

The (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO will declare elected the candidate with the most votes.

The (A)RO will give public notice of the result.

The (A)RO will publish a notice with the name of each candidate elected, the number of votes for all candidates, and the number of rejected ballot papers.

The (A)RO may allow candidates to make speeches after the result is declared. Please check arrangements with your (A)RO.

What happens to the paperwork after the result is announced?

The (A)RO must seal all election documentation and add a description of the contents to each packet. In England and Wales, the (A)RO will forward them on to the Electoral Registration Officer. In Scotland, the documents are held by the Returning Officer.

For more information see our guidance on [what happens to the election paperwork after the declaration of the result](#).

Last updated: 11 January 2024

After the election

This section sets out what happens after the election, including actions that candidates must take.

This covers:

- submitting your spending return and the associated deadlines
- return of your deposit
- access and supply of election documents
- election petitions

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Deadlines

Returns and declarations

SHORT CAMPAIGN

After the election, the agent should make sure that:

- all invoices are received no later than 21 calendar days after the election result is declared [\[1\]](#)
- all invoices are paid no later than 28 calendar days after the election result is declared [\[2\]](#)
- an election spending return reporting details of the candidate's short campaign spending and donations, together with a declaration confirming the return is complete and correct to the best of their knowledge and belief, is reported to the (Acting) Returning Officer no later than 35 days after the election result is declared [\[3\]](#)

The candidate must provide a written statement of their personal expenses in the short campaign to their agent within 21 days of the result being declared. [\[4\]](#)

The candidate must also send the Returning Officer a declaration confirming that the return is complete and correct to the best of their knowledge and belief. This must be done within seven working days of the return being submitted. [\[5\]](#)

If the candidate is outside the United Kingdom when the declaration is due, the deadline for submitting their declaration is extended to 14 days after they come back. [\[6\]](#)

Please note that if the deadline for any of the above falls on a weekend or public holiday, the deadline will move to the next working day. [\[7\]](#)

You must still submit a return even if you haven't spent any money. [\[8\]](#) This is called a 'nil return'.

There are consequences for failure to submit spending returns and these are set out in [What happens if a spending return or declaration isn't submitted?](#)

LONG CAMPAIGN

You should submit a declaration of your total spending in the long campaign no later than 35 calendar days after the election result is declared.

You should submit this to the Electoral Commission, rather than to the Returning Officer.

POLITICAL PARTY SPENDING

Political parties contesting a UK Parliamentary general election must also report the details of their fundraising and campaign spending to us. Detailed information can be found in our guidance for parties.

Invoices received or paid outside of the deadlines

We call claims (invoices for your candidate spending in the short campaign) that are received by the election agent later than the deadline of 21 days, unpaid claims.

Unpaid claims cannot legally be paid unless a court order is gained granting leave to pay the claim.

[\[9\]](#) It can be an offence to pay an unpaid claim without a court order. [\[10\]](#)

We call claims (invoices) that were submitted within the deadline of 21 days but remain unpaid later than the deadline of 28 days, disputed claims.

Disputed claims cannot legally be paid without a court order first being gained granting leave to pay the claim. [\[11\]](#)

Any claim paid:

- after the 21 day deadline for receipt, or
- after the 28 day deadline for payments,

following a successful application to the court and after the deadline for submission of election spending returns, must be reported in writing to the returning officer within seven days of payment and be accompanied by a copy of the court order. [\[12\]](#)

You should also forward a copy of the Order to the Electoral Commission.

1. Section 78(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.78(2) RPA 1983
3. S.81(1) & s.82(1) RPA 1983
4. S.74(2) & S.78(1) RPA 1983
5. S.74(2) & S.78(1) RPA 1983
6. S.82(2) RPA 1983
7. S.119 RPA 1983
8. S.81 RPA 1983
9. S.78(4) RPA 1983
10. S.78(3) RPA 1983
11. S.79(2) RPA 1983
12. S.81(5) RPA 1983

Completing your return

Short campaign

The short campaign spending and donations report is known as a 'return'.

The agent must complete the return.

The return should include the following for each item of spending: ^[1]

- what the spending was for – for example, leaflets or advertising
- the name and address of the supplier
- the amount or value
- details of when it was incurred and paid
- details of any unpaid or disputed amounts
- details of any notional spending, and a declaration of its value
- invoices or receipts for any payment of £20 or over
- details of any personal expenses

The return must also include details of all donations over £50. ^[2] There is more information on the details that you need to report in [Candidate spending](#) and [Candidate donations](#).

The candidate and agent must also sign a declaration that the return is complete and correct to the best of their knowledge and belief. ^[3] It is your responsibility to fully and accurately report candidate spending.

It is a criminal offence to make a false declaration knowingly. ^[4]

Long campaign

Candidates and agents should submit a declaration of their total spending in the long campaign, to show that you have not exceeded the spending limit. You should submit this declaration directly to the Electoral Commission, rather than to your local Returning Officer.

You can submit this declaration by email to candidates@electoralcommission.org.uk or by post to:

Compliance and Transparency Team

Electoral Commission

3 Bunhill Row

London EC1Y 8YZ

You should provide:

- your constituency
- your party (if any)
- your spending limit
- how much you spent
- a declaration that the spending total provided is accurate

Forms you will need:

We will publish updated forms shortly.

1. Section 81(3) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.81(3)(e) RPA 1983
3. S.82(1) & (2) RPA 1983
4. S.82(6) RPA 1983

Last updated: 6 March 2024

What happens if a spending return or declaration isn't submitted?

Failure to submit a spending return or declaration by the deadline without an authorised excuse is a criminal offence. [\[1\]](#)

The Electoral Commission has a legal remit to secure compliance with the rules on candidates' spending and donations, but no sanctioning powers in respect of breaches. Suspected breaches of the rules should be referred to the police.

If a candidate has been elected but the spending return and/or declaration has not been submitted by the deadline they are barred from sitting or voting, and can be subject to a forfeit or fine of £100 per day if they do so. [\[2\]](#)

1. Section 84 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.85 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What happens if you don't follow the rules?

If you do not comply with the legal or regulatory requirements, you may be subject to criminal sanctions. If you win the election and someone succeeds in an election petition against your campaign activities or reporting, you could be barred from holding office.

If you take donations that you can't legally accept, we may apply to the courts for them to be forfeited.

You can find more information about the Commission's regulatory role on our [website](#).

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Return of deposit

Those candidates who received more than 5% of the total valid votes cast in the constituency will have their deposit returned by the next working day following the declaration of result.

Those candidates who have polled equal to or less than 5% of the total number of valid votes cast in the constituency will lose their deposit. ^[1]

1. Rule 53 Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Parliamentary oath or affirmation

The successful candidate will be given information on how they will be able to attend Parliament.

Before a person can sit and vote in the House of Commons they must take the Parliamentary oath or make an affirmation to the monarch. This is known as the swearing in and will take place at the start of the new Parliament. You can find more information on taking the oath or affirmation on the UK Parliament's [website](#).

Last updated: 4 December 2023

What happens to the paperwork after the result is announced?

In England and Wales, all election documents are securely held by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO). [1] In Scotland, they are retained by the Returning Officer. [2]

Most documents are available for public inspection. Please note that ballot papers are not open to public inspection.

Inspection and supply of the marked registers and lists of absent voters [3]

The marked electoral registers and lists of absent voters show who has been issued with a ballot paper, who has returned their postal ballot paper, and who has had a proxy vote cast on their behalf.

You can inspect or obtain copies of the marked register of electors and lists of absent voters after the election if you make a request in writing. In England and Wales, the request must be made to the Electoral Registration Officer. Contact details are available on our [website](#).

In Scotland, the request must be made to the Returning Officer. You can contact the Returning Officer through the local council.

Note that you can only use the information obtained from these documents for research or electoral purposes.

The request for inspection must specify: [4]

- which documents are requested
- the purposes for which the information in any document will be used
- where the request is to inspect the marked register or lists, any reason why inspecting the full register or unmarked lists would not be sufficient to achieve that purpose
- who will inspect the documents
- the date on which you wish to inspect the documents
- whether you would prefer to inspect the documents in a printed or data form

Inspection is under supervision and will be free of charge. You won't be able to take copies but may make handwritten notes.

The request for supply must specify: [5]

- which of the marked register or lists (or the relevant part of the register or lists) are requested
- whether a printed copy of the records or lists is requested or a copy in data form
- the purposes for which the marked register or lists will be used and why the supply or purchase of a copy of the full register or unmarked lists would not be sufficient to achieve that purpose

The requested document will be supplied for a fee of £10 plus £2 for printed and £1 for data versions per 1,000 entries. [6]

Note that after 12 months these documents, held by the Electoral Registration Officer, will be destroyed unless a court order directs otherwise. [\[7\]](#)

Under current data protection legislation, personal data processed for any purpose shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose. If you request and are supplied with any of the information listed above, once the purpose for collecting this data has passed, you need to consider if there is a reason for you to retain that data. If there is not you should ensure secure destruction of any data held.

Nomination papers may only be inspected during the time for delivery of nomination papers, and only by candidates, their election agent, their proposer and seconder.

Inspection of other election documents [\[8\]](#)

You can inspect other election documents, but you will not be allowed to make any notes or take copies of these documents. The only documents that cannot be inspected are:

- the ballot papers
- the corresponding number lists
- the certificates allowing polling station staff to vote at the polling station they are working at
- the Ballot Paper Refusal List (information from this list can only be disclosed to the relevant elector or proxy on request following their refusal) [\[9\]](#)

After 12 months all of the election documents that are held by the Electoral Registration Officer will be destroyed, unless a court order directs otherwise. [\[10\]](#)

Inspection of election spending returns [\[11\]](#)

The spending returns and declarations are held by the (Acting) Returning Officer. Spending returns and declarations can be inspected by any person after they have been submitted. Copies can also be made for a fee of 20p per side.

Spending returns and declarations are kept for two years. You can request to have them returned to you or your agent at the end of this period. If you or your agent does not want them back, the spending returns and declarations will be destroyed.

1. Rule 55 Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. Rule 55 and 58(2) Sch 1 RPA 1983
3. Regulations 117 and 118 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR (E&W) 2001), regs 117 and 118 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (S) 2001)
4. Reg.118(2) RPR (E&W) 2001, reg.118(2) RPR (S) 2001
5. Reg.117(3) RPR (E&W) 2001, reg.117(3) RPR (S) 2001
6. Reg.120(2) RPR (E&W) 2001, reg.120(2) RPR (S) 2001
7. Rule 57(1) Sch 1 RPA 1983
8. Rule 57(2) Sch 1 RPA 1983, reg.118(2) RPR (E&W) 2001, reg.118(2) RPR (S) 2001
9. Section 32 Voter Identification Regulations 2022
10. Rule 57(1) Sch 1 RPA 1983
11. S.89 RPA 1983

Last updated: 4 December 2023

Election petitions

The outcome of a UK Parliamentary election can be challenged through an election petition.

Lodging an election petition

Only certain people can lodge an election petition, and only under specific circumstances.

An election petition can be presented by: [\[1\]](#)

- someone claiming to have been a candidate at the election, or
- someone claiming to have had a right to be elected or returned at the election, or
- an elector (not an anonymously registered elector) who had a right to vote at the election (although they need not have voted)

The allowable grounds for a petition are that there has been an: [\[2\]](#)

- undue election, or
- undue return

There is a separate judicial process for challenging the election of an MP on the grounds that they were or are disqualified under the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 (as amended). In that case, an application may be made to the Privy Council for a declaration to that effect (provided that a petition is not pending or an Order of the House of Commons to disregard the disqualification has not been made).

The Member whose election or return is complained about must be a respondent to the petition. [\[3\]](#) If the petition complains about the conduct of the (Acting) Returning Officer or their staff during the election, the (Acting) Returning Officer must also be a respondent. [\[4\]](#)

Normally, a petition must be presented within 21 calendar days after the date of the return of the writ [\[5\]](#) (which in most cases will be the day after the election) and can be lodged at any time up to, but no later than, 12 midnight on the last day. However, if the petition complains of corrupt or illegal practices involving the payment of money or other reward, or an illegal practice relating to election spending, further time may be allowed.

For any questions relating to election petitions, including to confirm the deadlines for lodging an election petition, you should contact:

In England and Wales:

The Election Petitions Office
Room E105
Royal Courts of Justice
Strand
London
WC2A 2LL

Email: Election_Petitions@justice.gov.uk

Phone: 0207 947 6877

Fax: 0870 324 0024

In Scotland:

The Petitions Department
Court of Session
Parliament Square
Edinburgh
EH1 1RQ

Email: supreme.courts@scotcourts.gov.uk

Tel: 0131 240 6747

Fax: 0131 240 6711

There are costs attached to an election petition. If you are considering lodging an election petition, we strongly recommend that you take independent legal advice.

1. Section 121 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)
2. S.120 RPA 1983
3. S.121(2) RPA 1983
4. S.121(2) RPA 1983
5. S.122 RPA 1983

Last updated: 9 January 2024

Resources for Candidates and Agents at UK Parliamentary elections in Great Britain

Guidance for Candidates and Agents at UK Parliamentary elections in Great Britain

What you need to know before you stand as a candidate

There are different nomination papers for elections held on or after 2 May 2024. Please make sure you use the correct version, depending on when the poll will be held. Using the wrong nominations pack may cause your nomination to be rejected.

Candidate spending

Candidate donations

Campaigning

Nominations

There are different nomination papers for elections held on or after 2 May 2024. Please make sure you use the correct version, depending on when the poll will be held. Using the wrong nominations pack may cause your nomination to be rejected.

Postal votes

Polling day

The referenced media source is missing and needs to be re-embedded.

Verification and count

After the election

Last updated: 22 December 2023