

Recall petitions media guide You are in the section Home Currently reading: of 13 - Show page contents On this page Overview Opening a recall petition Signing the petition Signing in person : Great Britain : Northern Ireland Absent voting Close of the signing period and petition outcome Media reporting in the petition period Campaigning at the petition Previous recall petitions Roles and responsibilities More information Introduction This guide is designed to provide answer to key questions on recall petitions. You can use the contents box to easily jump to different sections of this webpage, and click the drop-down questions to see answers. Overview What is a recall petition? A recall petition is the process by which an MP can lose their seat in the House of Commons. Once open, constituents have six weeks to sign a recall petition, to say they believe their MP should be removed. Only those who want to see the MP removed need to sign the petition. If at least 10% of the electorate in the constituency signs the petition, the MP will lose their seat and a by-election will be triggered. The recalled MP can stand as a candidate at the by-election. The recall petition process was introduced by the Recall of MPs Act 2015. When can a recall petition be triggered? A recall petition will be triggered if an MP has been: convicted of an offence and received a custodial sentence (including a suspended sentence) or ordered to be detained, other than solely under mental health legislation barred from the House of Commons for 10 sitting days or 14 calendar days, or convicted of providing false or misleading information for allowance claims under the Parliamentary Standards Act 2009 In the case of a conviction, the recall petition will only be opened if the conviction, sentence or order have not been overturned during the appeal period and when any appeals have been heard and dismissed. A recall petition will not be opened if: a UK Parliamentary general election is due to be held within the next six months a recall petition is already underway in respect of the MP, or the MP's seat has already been vacated Opening a recall petition Who opens a recall petition? The Petition Officer opens a recall petition when the Speaker of the House of Commons notifies them that an MP has met the conditions above. The Petition Officer is the Returning Officer for the constituency (in England and Wales this is the Acting Returning Officer). What steps must the Petition Officer take in opening the recall petition? The Petition Officer must designate up to 10 signing places in the constituency where people can sign the petition. Signing places must be open for the six weeks of the recall petition on Monday to Friday between the hours of 9am and 5pm. However, the Petition Officer has discretion to extend these hours. The Petition Officer must also designate the opening date of the petition. This will usually be the 10th working day after they have received notice from the Speaker. Once the Petition Officer has designated the signing places and date for opening the petition, they must send a notice to all voters who are eligible to sign the petition. This is similar to a poll card at elections and will tell voters what the petition is about and which signing place they are allocated to and the opening hours. Registered postal voters can sign the petition by post. No later than three working days after receiving the notice from the Speaker, the Petition Officer must publish: the number of people entitled to sign the petition, the number of people who would need to sign the petition for it to be successful. This notice would usually be published on the council website. The Petition Officer must also publish a notice stating: the name of the MP who is subject to the petition process the conditions which have triggered the petition for that MP the start and end dates for the signing period the location and opening hours of each signing place who is eligible to sign the petition. Signing the petition Who is eligible to sign the petition? To sign the

petition a person must be registered to vote at an address in the relevant UK Parliament constituency, and be: aged 18 or over (or will turn 18 before the end of the six-week signing period) a UK, Irish or qualifying Commonwealth citizen Can a person apply to register to vote while the petition is open and still sign? No. In order to sign the petition a person must have been added to the register three working days before the petition opens. In practice this means that any new applications to register must have been made on or before the date that the speaker gives notice of the petition in order to be eligible (which is usually ten working days before the petition opens for signing). What does the signing sheet look like? The signing sheet is set out in law and will look like this in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland: The signing sheet will look like this in Wales: Signing in person How do electors sign the petition in person? Eligible voters who want to sign the petition go to their allocated signing place. The Petition Officer will send them details of the location and opening hours. Voters need to bring an accepted form of photo ID in order to sign the petition at a signing place. The signing place will be set up in a similar way to a polling station. When a voter arrives at a signing place, a member of staff will: Ask their name and address so they can find them on the electoral register Ask for their photo ID, and check if it is acceptable If their ID is acceptable, they will issue them their signing sheet Once the voter has signed the sheet they place it in the ballot box. How are the signing sheets kept secure during the six-week period? At the end of each day that the petition is open, the ballot box is opened and the signing sheets are verified. This means checking that the total number of signing sheets matches the record of the number of signing sheets issued in that signing place. The signing sheets are then stored securely until the end of the signing period. : Great Britain What ID can people use? Accepted forms of ID include a UK, European Economic Area (EEA) or Commonwealth passport; a UK or EEA drivers' licence; and some concessionary travel passes, such as an older person's bus pass or an Oyster 60+ card. The full list of accepted ID is available on the Electoral Commission website. Those who do not have an accepted form can apply for free voter ID. Voters will be able to use expired ID if they are still recognisable from the photo. How do people apply for free voter ID? Anyone without an accepted form of ID can apply for a free Voter Authority Certificate at [voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk](http://voter-authority-certificate.service.gov.uk), or by requesting a paper form from their local electoral registration office. The deadline for applying for a free Voter Authority Certificate is 5pm six working days before the close of the petition. What if someone loses their ID? If voters lose their existing form of ID, or if it is stolen or damaged and the deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate has passed, people will be able to appoint an emergency proxy to sign on their behalf up until 5pm on the last day of the signing period. : Northern Ireland What ID can people use? Accepted forms of ID include a UK, Irish or EEA driving licence or a UK, Irish or EU passport (including the Irish Passport Card). The full list of accepted ID is available on the Electoral Commisison website. Those who do not have an accepted form can apply for an Electoral Identity Card. Voters will be able to use expired ID if they are still recognisable from the photo. How do people apply for an Electoral Identity Card? Anyone without an accepted form of ID can apply to the Electoral Office of Northern Ireland for a free Electoral Identity Card. More information and details of how to apply are available from the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI) website . Absent voting Signing by post Existing postal voters will be issued with a signing sheet by post. They must ensure that the completed signing sheet is returned to the Petitions Officer before the end of the signing period in order for their signing sheet to be counted. Anyone

who is not an existing postal voter but who does not want, or is unable, to go to a signing place can apply to their electoral registration office for a postal signing pack for the petition. The deadline to apply is 5pm 11 working days before the close of the signing period. about postal voting along and postal voting application forms . Signing by proxy Voters can register for a 'proxy vote'. This means they ask someone they trust to sign on their behalf. They need to complete and sign a proxy application form and return it to their local electoral registration office by 5pm six working days before the close of the signing period (in Northern Ireland it is eleven working days before the close of signing period). Their proxy will need to show an accepted form of ID at the signing place before they can sign. about voting by proxy and proxy vote application forms . Close of the signing period and petition outcome The count The Petition Officer must take reasonable steps to count the signatures as soon as practicable after the end of the signing period, and no later than one day after. The only people who can attend the counting of signatures is the Petition Officer and their staff and any representatives of the Electoral Commission or an observer accredited by the Electoral Commission. Media are not entitled to attend the count. What happens after the signatures are counted? As soon as reasonably practicable the Petition Officer must: determine whether the recall petition is successful or unsuccessful notify the Speaker of the outcome, and give public notice of the outcome. If at least 10% of the eligible electorate have signed the petition, the petition will be successful. The MP's seat will become vacant on the date that the Petition Officer notifies the Speaker of the outcome. When would any by-election take place? As with any UK Parliamentary by-election, the writ for the vacant seat is moved by the party who previously held the seat. This means the party's Chief Whip must notify the Speaker of the House of Commons, they must put a motion to MPs, and if agreed, the Speaker will notify the relevant Returning Officer. There is no statutory time limit for the moving of the writ. More information on by-elections processes can be found on Parliament's website. Can a recall petition be closed early? A petition can only be closed before the end of the six-week signing period, if: the MP's seat is made vacant for any other reason (such as resignation) the MP's conviction, sentence of imprisonment or detention order is overturned, or Parliament calls an early UK Parliamentary general election which will be held within six months of the Speaker's notice. Media reporting in the petition period What can the media report during the petition period? Electoral law prevents the publication of any statement that could indicate if an individual has signed the petition or not; any forecasts on the result of the petition; and the publication of exit polls before the end of the final day of the signing period. Anyone who makes any statement on turnout or about individuals who sign the petition would be guilty of an offence. Campaigning at the petition When do rules on petition campaigning apply? People or organisations may wish to campaign for or against the recall petition. There are rules for spending and donations on petition campaigns. There is a set time, or 'regulated period', when the rules on spending and donations apply. The regulated period will: start on the day after the Speaker of the House of Commons notifies the Petition Officer that the conditions for opening a petition have been met and end on the day the Petition Officer notifies the Speaker of the House of Commons of the result of the petition. What types of campaigners are there and what are the spending rules for them? There are two types of campaigners; 'registered' and 'un-registered' campaigners. During the regulated period, the spending limits are: £500 for non-registered campaigners £10,000 for registered campaigners An eligible person or organisation can become registered by notifying the Petition Officer in writing. They

can only be a registered campaigner if they are: an individual registered on a UK electoral register or resident in the UK a UK registered political party (including 'minor' parties) a UK registered company which is incorporated in the UK and carries on business in the UK a UK registered trade union a UK registered building society a UK registered limited liability partnership which carries on business in the UK a UK registered friendly, industrial or provident society a UK based unincorporated association that carries on the majority of its business or other activities in the UK Registered campaigners must also notify the Petition Officer of a 'responsible person'. This person is responsible for making sure the registered campaigner follows the rules on spending, donations and reporting. If a campaigner incurs spending as part of a joint plan with one or more other campaigners, that spending will count towards the spending limit of all the campaigners involved in the arrangement. Registered campaigners must submit a spending return to the Petition Officer with details of donations and spending. The return must be submitted within 30 days from the day after the Petition Officer notifies the Speaker of the House of Commons of the result of the petition. More information about the spending rules is available in our spending and donations guidance . What are the donations rules for campaigners? Registered campaigners are subject to rules on donations they receive towards spending on petition campaigns. Donations over £500 must come from a permissible source. Permissible sources are: a UK registered political party (including 'minor' parties) an individual registered on a UK electoral register, including overseas electors and those leaving bequests a UK registered company which is incorporated within the UK and carries on business in the UK a UK registered trade union a UK registered building society a UK registered limited liability partnership (LLP) that carries on business in the UK a UK registered friendly society a UK unincorporated association that is based and carries on business or other activities wholly or mainly in the UK s have 30 days from receipt to check permissibility. s must return impermissible donations. If a campaigner does not return the donation within this time, they will be deemed to have accepted it and may also be subject to enforcement action, including forfeiture of the donation. Registered campaigners who are registered political parties (excluding minor parties) do not report donations to the Petition Officer as they report their donations to the Electoral Commission. All other registered campaigners must report donations over £500, including impermissible donations, in the spending return to the Petition Officer. Please see our spending and donations guidance for more information about the donations rules. Previous recall petitions Have there been previous recall petitions? There have been three recall petitions to date: North Antrim in 2018 Peterborough in 2019 Brecon and Radnorshire in 2019 The Commission published a combined report on both 2019 recall petitions and a separate report on the North Antrim recall petition . Roles and responsibilities The Petition Officer's role is to: open a recall petition notify voters that a recall petition has been opened oversee the administration of the petition, including publishing a register of voters who can sign the petition and notifying those voters of the petition declare the result, including notifying the Speaker of the House of Commons receive donation and spending returns and make them available for public inspection. The Petition Officer is the same person as the Returning Officer in a constituency. The Electoral Registration Officer's role is to: maintain the register of electors and list of absent voters (postal and proxy voters) The role of the police is to: investigate breaches enforce compliance with the law The Electoral Commission's role is to: provide advice and guidance to help people understand the rule forfeit impermissible donations, if necessary, by court order

publish a report on any issues relating to administration of a recall petition and the framework for campaign spending and donations at these events. More information Further guidance This factsheet explains the main rules. We have published full guidance for petition campaigners on spending and donations and imprints . We have also published guidance for Petition Officers. Contact the Electoral Commission press office Email: [press@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:press@electoralcommission.org.uk) England, Great Britain or Northern Ireland phone number: 020 7271 0704 Scotland phone number: 0131 225 0211 Wales phone number: 029 2034 6824 Out of office hours phone number (for media calls only): 07789 920 414 Page history First published: 8 June 2023 Last updated: 20 June 2023 Related content Find our press releases, resources, and media contacts Types of elections about the types of elections in the UK. Accepted forms of photo ID Learn about the different types of photo ID that will be accepted at elections that require photo ID Blog Explore our latest blog posts and learn more about key topics.