

Our role as a regulator | Electoral Commission      Search      Our role as a regulator      You are in the section Home      On this page Registering political parties Registering non-party campaigners Helping parties and campaigners comply with the rules Publishing political finance data Regulating imprints on campaign material What happens when the law is broken First published: 1 August 2022 Last updated: 3 October 2022 Summary As a regulator, we: maintain registers of political parties in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and register non-party campaigners provide guidance for anyone who might want to stand or campaign in an election publish political finance data regulate the imprint rules for parties and campaigners take action if we have reason to suspect the political finance law has been broken Registering political parties We maintain the registers of political parties in Great Britain and Northern Ireland . If a party wants to stand candidates at an election using a party name, description or emblem, they need to register with us . about how political parties are registered An application to register includes: a party name formal documents, including the party's constitution, and its financial structure, showing the party can comply with election finance laws details of important roles, such as leader, treasurer and nominating officer An application can also include party descriptions and emblems (these are optional). We check each application to make sure only permitted names, descriptions and emblems are approved for use on ballot papers. They all must pass certain legal checks , including not risking voters being confused or misled when they look at a ballot paper. Once registered, a party has legal responsibilities under electoral law, including only accepting money from specified permissible sources, and submitting regular financial reports to us. Did you know? Did you know? Anyone can comment on a party registration application . Parties can have up to 12 registered descriptions. Candidates can choose to use any of these on the ballot paper. At some elections, candidates can use a party description, instead of a party name, on the ballot paper. It must be clear which party they're standing for. In Scottish Parliament elections, parties can add 'Scottish' to their name without needing to register an additional description. In Senedd and local council elections in Wales, parties can add 'Welsh' or 'Cymreig' to their name without needing to register an additional description. Registering non-party campaigners Non-party campaigners are individuals or organisations that campaign in the run-up to elections, but are not standing as political parties or candidates. They often campaign on certain issues, or in support or opposition to particular parties or candidates. When they spend over a certain amount on campaigning, they need to register with us, and report on their finances . We publish a list of registered non-party campaigners . Helping parties and campaigners comply with the rules We provide guidance for anyone who might want to stand or campaign in an election, from political parties and campaigners, to candidates and their agents. This guidance helps them to understand what electoral rules they need to follow, and what they need to report to us. It should be possible for election campaigning to be innovative and engaging. To help parties comply with the law, and be innovative, we offer an advice service. We're available to explain to parties and campaigners what impact their campaign activity may have on their financial reports. There is a strong culture of compliance with political finance law in the UK. We work with parties and campaigners before elections to ensure high levels of compliance, so that we don't have to take enforcement action afterwards. Publishing political finance data We publish financial data every quarter about donations and loans for parties and campaigners in the UK. These data sets show how parties and campaigners are being funded throughout each year. We publish statements of accounts annually. After

elections, we publish spending returns from parties and campaigners . This shows what they have spent on campaigning to influence the way that people vote. Parties and campaigners must send their donations and loans reports, accounts, and spending returns to us by deadlines set out in law. We may take action if we don't receive them on time, especially when that delays transparency of the data. View all financial data in our database

Regulating imprints on campaign material We regulate the 'imprint' rules for parties and campaigners (but not candidates), which requires that campaign material includes information identifying the person or organisation who paid for it. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, all printed campaign material, such as leaflets, must contain this information In Scotland, the rule also applies to digital campaign material, like social media adverts. What imprints must include

What imprints must include Printed campaign material must include the name and address of: the printer the promoter who it's being promoted for (for example, the candidate or party) In Scotland, digital campaign material must include: the promoter who it's being promoted for (for example, the candidate or party) Learn more about imprints on campaign material

What happens when the law is broken We will take action if we have reason to suspect the political finance law has been broken. The laws for political parties and other campaigners can also be enforced by the police, and some offences can only be investigated by the police. If we identify one of those offences we can notify the police so that they can decide whether to investigate. about our enforcement work