

February 2023 Summary From November 2023, there will be changes that simplify and clarify the offence of undue influence. Undue influence is when someone uses, or threatens to use, force or violence to make someone vote a certain way or not vote at all. These changes will apply to local elections in England, Police and Crime Commissioner elections in England and Wales, and general elections in the UK including recall petitions. Changes The changes will simplify and clarify the offence of undue influence and will define the types of illegal behaviour used to unfairly influence someone's vote. This should make it simpler for the police to take action when allegations of undue influence are made. This includes the offences of both direct and indirect undue influence, and those taking place both before and after an election. The changes apply to all campaign activity, including printed materials, and would extend to anyone who seeks to intimidate a voter either inside or outside a polling station. There will be an extra sentencing option, in addition to imposing criminal penalties such as a prison sentence or fine, to strengthen the deterrent against the intimidation of candidates and campaigners. This covers hostility towards someone based on their relationship with a campaigner (for example, a family member of the campaigner) as well. Our role We will support the electoral community by updating our guidance for electoral administrators, and polling station staff, setting out what behaviour is and is not allowed at polling stations. We also run public awareness campaigns ahead of elections. Our 'your vote is yours alone' campaign, delivered in partnership with Crimestoppers, empowers voters to protect their vote. We provide a range of resources for local authorities to use in the run up to polling day, to help ensure no one feels pressurised to vote in a certain way. We will update our Code of Conduct for campaigners on what they should consider when campaigning outside polling stations. We will also update our guidance for candidates and agents. We already publish joint guidance with the National Police Chiefs' Council, Crown Prosecution Service, and College of Policing to help candidates recognise and respond to intimidatory behaviour. We will continue, with those partners, to keep this under review and update it appropriately. Related content Elections Act about the UK Government's Elections Act and what it means for voting and campaigning About the Elections Act about the Elections Bill, including the measures it contains and which elections it applies to. Improving the accessibility of elections Read about the proposals to make it easier for people with disabilities to vote. Changes for EU Citizens about proposed changes to EU Citizens' rights to vote and stand in elections.