

Campaign material and campaigning on polling day | Electoral Commission Search
Campaign material and campaigning on polling day You are in the Voter section
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this page Materials from political parties, candidates and campaigners Types of
material Laws and requirements Our role Campaigning on polling day Pre-election
period Changing the laws on campaign material First published: 6 April 2022 Last
updated: 12 April 2023 Summary Throughout the year, you might see material from
political parties, candidates or campaigners. This could be online or in paper form,
such as a leaflet through your letterbox. Different rules apply to materials from
political parties, candidates and campaigners, depending on its content and who
publishes it. Types of material Campaign material We use 'campaign material' to mean
any material that political parties, candidates or non-party campaigners send to
voters. It could be an update about what's happening in the constituency, information
about a policy, or promotional material for an election or referendum, for example.
Electoral law only covers certain types of campaign material. Election material
Election material has a specific meaning in law: it is material that can be
reasonably regarded as intended to promote an outcome in an election. It could be
promoting a candidate or a political party. We are responsible for ensuring that
election material promoting a political party complies with the relevant rules
whereas the police would investigate material that promotes an identifiable
candidate. Other types of material There are also separate rules about material which
relates to a referendum or promotes an outcome in a recall petition. Laws and
requirements Election material is subject to a number of requirements under electoral
law. Broadly, restrictions under electoral law are that printed and digital election
material must: not make false statements about the personal character or conduct of
any candidate not resemble a poll card abide by further restrictions relating to the
display of material Imprints Imprints All printed election material must include an
imprint. An imprint states who is promoting it and who they're promoting it for.
Usually with election material that's for a specific candidate, the material will be
either published by them or on their behalf. In that case, the candidate's name and
address must appear in the imprint. The imprint rules for candidates only apply once
they are officially a candidate. This is typically about six weeks before the
election. Before that, the candidate imprint rules do not apply. Currently, digital
election material in England, Wales and Northern Ireland does not require an imprint.
In Scotland, digital election material must have an imprint. The UK Government's
Elections Act 2022 introduces digital imprint requirements across the whole UK from
November 2023. about imprints Laws and requirements Other laws relating to published
material also apply to campaign material. Under the Representation of the People Act
1983, campaign material must not contain comments that are defamatory. This means
they should not contain a false statement about the personal character or conduct of
another candidate. 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. If you have a concern that
campaign material has broken either of these rules, you should contact the police.
What's not in the law There is nothing in law that requires a party to include their
logo on campaign material. There is also no requirement in law to specify what
colours or branding a party needs to use in their material. Our role We encourage all
campaigners to undertake their vital role responsibly and to support campaign
transparency. We also urge all parties and campaigners to consider the confidence of

voters in the way they campaign. Clarity about who is responsible for material that voters are viewing is an important part of maintaining that confidence. We make sure that printed election material complies with electoral law. We also regulate aspects of online campaigning. about online political advertising , as well as who to contact if you have a question or concern. Political materials We don't regulate the content of election or campaign material. If you have concerns or complaints about the content of printed or online election or campaign material, you should contact the political party or candidate who published it. You might see political materials, such as posts on social media, all year round. We don't regulate the content of political material. Campaigning on polling day Campaigning is allowed on polling day, so you might see campaign material on social media or receive a leaflet through your door on polling day itself. But campaign material is not allowed within the perimeters of a polling station. This means there shouldn't be any campaign posters, banners or other advertising literature: in the polling station itself on the polling station building on the land of the polling station, such a car park However, there's nothing to stop the house next door to the polling station from displaying campaign material in the window or putting a banner up in the garden. There may be some local planning restrictions that prevent placards or banners being put up nearby, but this would not be covered by electoral law. Pre-election period We do not have a role in regulating the 'pre-election period' ahead of elections, or purdah as it is sometimes known. You may find useful the information about the pre-election period of sensitivity available from the House of Commons Library. The UK Government publishes guidance on the conduct of civil servants in the pre-election period. The Local Government Association also has a short guide to publicity during the pre-election period. Changing the laws on campaign material Changing the laws on campaign material We are not able to change the laws on campaign material. However, we do urge parties and campaigners to be responsible in how they campaign, and consider the confidence of voters in what they choose to do. Any changes to the laws on campaign material would require a change to legislation in Parliament. Your location: Change England Northern Ireland Scotland Wales Overseas We're showing you content for . Select 'change' to choose a different location. Related content Imprints on election campaign material Some election campaign material must state who is promoting it, and who for. about imprints. Online campaigning Online political ads, know them like they know you. Find out about political advertising, from the claims made in ads to the use of your data The electoral register Find out about the electoral register, including the different types, who holds it, and what it can be used for. Types of elections about the types of elections in the UK.