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Performance analysis 2020/21: Goal two You are in the Annual Report and Accounts
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First published: 15 September 2021 Last updated: 21 October 2021 Goal 2 To ensure an
increasingly trusted and transparent system of regulation in political finance,
overseeing compliance, promoting understanding amongst those regulated and
proactively pursuing breaches. This goal captures our regulatory role. We focus on
two areas which are at the heart of a healthy democracy: ensuring transparency, and
good regulation. Key achievements To ensure transparency, we: published financial
reports from parties and campaigners worked with parties to deliver financial
reports, and adapted our pattern of routine publications as a consequence of
challenges parties faced with delivering reports as a result of the pandemic
registered political parties and other campaigners and published details in online
registers produced new guidance to help campaigners understand and comply with new
legal requirements for transparency of digital campaign material introduced by the
Scottish Parliament To support good regulation we: found flexible and new ways to
continue our focus on supporting parties and campaigners during the pandemic built up
our regulatory intelligence work to drive proactive interactions with individual
campaigners took action and imposed sanctions when the political finance law were
broken continued to evolve our regulatory approach to deliver a greater package of
support for parties and campaigners Performance measures Measures Performance We
publish routine financial returns from parties and campaigners, including statements
of accounts, within 30 working days of receiving them (target 100%) 37.99% Not
achieved 4 We check a minimum of 25% of all financial returns for accuracy and
compliance each year 38.95% Achieved We publish 100% of guidance products on time
with no substantive errors 100% Achieved We provide accurate advice within five to 20
days of receipt of the request, depending on the complexity of the advice (Target
90%) 94.44% Achieved We notify applicants of the outcome of their registration
applications within 30 days of a complete application 75% of the time (Target – 75%)
58.21% Not achieved 5 We conduct timely and proportionate investigations of which 90%
are completed within 180 days 94.44% Achieved We issue 90% of final notices setting
out our sanctions within 21 days of the deadline for representations. 94.29% Achieved
We make timely regulatory recommendations that reflect the principles guiding our
approach to effective regulatory framework 100% Achieved Our activities during the
year Ensuring transparency Throughout the year, we focussed on delivering the
responsibilities we are accountable for to the UK's parliaments. We maintained the
registers of political parties, ensuring only parties meeting the legal tests are on
the register, and we continued reviewing descriptions to help voters identify the
party for which candidates are standing. We worked with parties and campaigners as
soon as the likely impact of the pandemic became clear to recognise the challenges of
delivering financial reports during the pandemic, and adapted our pattern of routine
publications appropriately. We published donations and loans data, statements of
accounts, and spending data for the 2019 UK Parliamentary General Election as quickly
as possible given understandable delays in delivery, and in some cases without any
delay at all. We continued developing a new online portal for party registration and
finance, which we will launch in 2021 and will improve how parties and campaigners
register and deliver financial returns We also developed a new online tool that
enabled people to view candidate spending data following the 2019 UKPGE in an
interactive and accessible way. Publishing the data in this format provides greater
transparency about the money received and spent by candidates at elections. Good

regulation We further developed our approach to regulatory intelligence to be more proactive and quickly identify and intervene where this could prevent or minimise non-compliance. This reduced the number of cases requiring enforcement action, and helped to prevent campaigners from breaking the rules. We will continue to focus on this. We are also developing a more systematic approach to gathering evidence of areas where targeted guidance and support can most benefit parties and campaigners. We set up a new regulatory support team dedicated to developing and implementing new and innovative ways to provide proactive support for parties and campaigners to help them comply with the law. Our outreach work included training sessions, seminars or other engagement with the Greater London Authority, the Local Government Association, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, and others. We also conducted a survey of campaigners on how they expected the pandemic to impact on their activities at the May 2021 polls to help us understand their challenges and concerns better. Increased stakeholder engagement and outreach work meant we were able to provide clarity to parties, candidates and campaigners on our work and preparations for the May 2021 polls. We produced new guidance for the digital imprint regime introduced by the Scottish Parliament, and produced our usual bespoke guidance for parties candidates and agents and campaigners in good time for the May 2021 polls despite the unusually high number of different elections taking place and the need to take account of the pandemic restrictions. The pandemic led to other new guidance, such as Frequently Asked Questions on the voiding of candidacy rules for the postponed 2020 elections, and guidance on sponsorship and valuing digital conference stands for party conferences. Finally, we continued to update our guidance where appropriate, including changes arising from the UK's departure from the European Union. We continued to use our investigation and sanctioning powers to identify and respond to non-compliance and deter future non-compliance where appropriate. We imposed financial penalties totalling £34k throughout 2020/21 and accepted the voluntary forfeiture of impermissible funds totalling £9k, removing these from the political finance system. We did not however take enforcement action where reports were delivered late due to the impact of the pandemic.

[report navigation links](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Performance analysis: Goal one](#) [Performance analysis: Goal three](#) [4](#) [5](#). As a consequence of the Covid pandemic many parties were unable to complete and deliver their statements of account by the legal deadlines, which meant that we were unable to publish them within 30 days of that deadline. ■ [Back to content at footnote 4](#)

5. As a result of the postponement of the 2020 polls, an unprecedented number of applications to register political parties or amend registered details were received in the months running up to the 2021 polls. In addition a small number of applications raised complex issues that required additional time to resolve. ■ [Back to content at footnote 5](#)