

UK general election 2024

Guidance for Quaker communities



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Introduction

An election is due to take place sometime in 2024. There are some laws and guidance documents that Quaker communities need to be aware of during the election period. Elections are regulated by the Electoral Commission, and charities are regulated by the Charity Commission or the Office for the Scottish Charity Regulator, so their websites are the main sources of information. If you have any questions please contact these organisations or contact the Quakers in Britain public affairs team via politics@quaker.org.uk. The public affairs team will send out more information to Quaker communities about issues and activities during the election in the coming months.

General guidance for charities on campaigning and political activity

The charity regulators in England & Wales and Scotland produce guidance on political campaigning. They set out what charities can and can't do when it comes to political activity. For example the Charity Commission for England & Wales guidance states:

- Political campaigning or activity must be undertaken by a charity only in the context of supporting the delivery of its charitable purpose.
- In the political arena, a charity must stress its independence and ensure that any involvement it has with political parties is balanced.
- A charity must not give support or funding to a political party, candidate or politician.

To read the guidance provided by the regulator where your charity is based use the following links:

The Charity Commission (CC9) for England & Wales:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political-activity-by-charities-cc9

Office for the Scottish Charity Regulator:

www.oscr.org.uk/news/updated-guidance-for-charities-campaigning-on-political-issues

Guidance for non-party campaigners

Organisations that campaign on issues around elections, but aren't political parties, are referred to as non-party campaigners. Many charities, including Quakers in Britain and some Area Meetings, will fall into this category. There are laws that non-party campaigners must follow on campaign spending, donations, and reporting.

Most charities won't have to do anything extra in relation to these regulations, because their activity won't count as regulated activity, or they won't spend enough on regulated activity to meet the reporting thresholds. But if you are campaigning on issues in the run-up to the election, it's worth checking if you need to register as a non-party campaigner.

The Electoral Commission has produced a new statutory Code of Practice for non-party campaigners which we encourage Quaker communities to take note of in the lead up to the next general election:

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/non-party-campaigner-code-practice

Non-statutory guidance for non-party campaigners

In addition to the statutory code there is also some non-statutory guidance for non-party campaigners at UK general elections which supplements the Code with additional information, advice and examples to help you understand the laws. There have also been some case studies of real campaigns provided to guide you in determining what limits or reporting apply to your campaign activities.

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/non-party-campaigners-uk-parliamentary-general-elections

Statutory guidance on digital imprints

When certain digital material is published, it must contain specific details to show who is responsible for publishing it.

These details are known as an 'imprint'. The imprint helps to ensure there is transparency for the public about who is campaigning on political issues.

The Electoral Commission's statutory guidance on digital imprints contains aspects that we have identified as potentially relevant to Quaker communities. The details are explained in the full statutory guidance:

www.electoralcommission.org.uk/statutory-guidance-digital-imprints

Who, what and when

Digital material includes digital publications, webpages, social media posts, and videos.

If you have paid for the material to be published as an advert, then it must have an imprint if it is 'political material'. This requirement applies to anyone publishing political material as a paid advert.

If you have not paid for the material to be published as an advert, then it is organic material. Organic material must have an imprint if it is **election material**, **referendum material** or **recall petition material**, and it is published by or on behalf of a relevant entity, such as a registered political party or registered non-party campaigner.

If you are a non-party campaigner that campaigns on an issue, you may find that none or only some of your material requires an imprint. You should consider whether an imprint is required for each piece of material, according to the facts.

Charity commission guidance on social media

The Charity Commission for England & Wales has published [new guidance on charities and social media](#). It points out that, though social media can be a powerful communication tool for charities, it can also have risks.

The guidance says it is important for trustees think about how their charity can use social media effectively to benefit it, the possible risks it may bring, and how trustees can manage those risks.

Trustees of charities that use social media are responsible for:

- agreeing and putting in place a social media policy so that you have internal controls that are appropriate and proportionate for your charity's needs and which are clear to everyone at the charity using social media.
- ensuring your social media policy is regularly reviewed to check it is working effectively and fits your charity's needs.
- ensuring your charity's social media use helps you achieve [your charity's purpose](#) (what your charity was set up to do) and in a way that is in your charity's best interests.
- complying with relevant laws.
- ensuring any campaigning or political activity that your charity does on social media [complies with the rules on political activity and campaigning](#).
- ensuring your processes help you keep people safe online including any extra considerations when dealing with vulnerable users. Read the "[Operating online](#)" section of CC guidance on safeguarding.

If your charity (for example Area Meeting) uses social media, you should have a social media policy. The guidance sets out what it should contain. It sets out how the Charity Commission would like charities to manage potential risks in posting or sharing social media content.

The guidance covers content posted or shared by trustees, employees or volunteers on their personal social media accounts. There is no expectation that trustees monitor personal social media accounts. However, if they become aware of content posted or shared by an individual being associated with and having a negative effect on the charity, they should consider what action to take to protect the charity.