

Donation rules

Key document

Centre
Rebuilding the centre ground

Date these procedures came into effect: 01/01/2026

Date these procedures must be updated by: 01/01/2027

This document sets out the people and types of groups we work with and the rules setting out which people or organisations we can and cannot work with.

Who is covered by this policy? This is applicable to all members of the public, companies or organisations that we work with outside of Centre.

Part one

Rules



Who can donate?

- Individuals making donations.
- Funding from companies or organisations.

Types of donation

We receive donations in a variety of ways. These include:

- Members of the public sending us donations.
- Membership of Centre.
- Donations towards a particular area of research.
- Commissioned papers.
- Sponsored events.
- Money or assets left to us within an individual's will.
- Business and other network membership fees.
- Payment for travel or speaking fees for events.

General rules

- We will not make donations to political parties.
- We have the right to reject or return donations or funding, including commissions or sponsorships.
- Any donations or payments you make to the Centre need to be from your own funds and not passed on from a third party.
- The amounts donated and the name of the company or individual who donates will be publicly recorded. This includes on the transparency page on our website and in our yearly report.

Rules for smaller donations

- If you donate more than £500 to us, you need to be on the UK electoral register. This does not include the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man.

Transparency for donations

The amount and the individual or company who donated will be listed on our website and annual report for:

- Each donor in our patrons' network.
- All organisations and any individual donors.
- All sponsorships and commissions; this also includes any contracts signed.
- Business network members.
- We may need to report your donation to the electoral commission if we become or are considered a non-party campaigner. This is usually for donations of more than £7,500 in a calendar year. The name and the value of the donation will be sent to the electoral commission and the details will be published on their website. However, the address of the person donating will not be made public.

Rules for all donations

- All donations over £500 from a single individual or organisation in a year, commissions and sponsorships need to be approved by our team.
- The editorial control will remain with Centre to maintain our independence.
- It will be clearly shown on graphics advertising events and on papers that we have received funding from a particular organisation.

Part two

Electoral commission reporting



Permissible sources

"In Great Britain, permissible sources are:

- Individuals registered on a UK electoral register, including overseas electors and those leaving bequests most UK-registered companies.
- Great Britain registered political parties.
- UK-registered trade unions.
- UK-registered building societies
- UK-registered limited liability partnerships (LLP) that carry on business in the UK
- UK-registered friendly societies
- UK-based unincorporated associations that carry on business or other activities in the UK some types of trust and certain public funds.

Where someone pays for the reasonable costs of an overseas visit, they are deemed to be a permissible donor".

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/political-registration-and-regulation/financial-reporting/donations-and-loans/permissible-sources>

"When political parties, individuals or other organisations receive a donation or loan, they have to:

- Record information about the donation or loan, such as the amount and who it was from.
- Check the source of the donation or loan, and decide if it comes from a permissible source.
- Decide whether to keep or return the donation or loan, depending on its source.
- Report it to us, if it's over the reportable amount or if they returned it".

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/political-registration-and-regulation/financial-reporting/donations-and-loans>

Non-party campaigner checks

"Some individuals and organisations campaign in the run-up to elections but do not stand as political parties or candidates. We call these individuals and organisations non-party campaigners. In electoral law, they are called third parties".

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-guidance/campaigner/non-party-campaigner>

All donors need to be aware that if we become a non-party campaigner, then their donations may be sent to the Electoral Commission and released and/or recorded if they are over £500.

Non-party campaigner checks

Based on our checks:

- We can spend more than £700 on regulated activities as a UK-registered company which is incorporated in the UK and carries on business in the UK.
- We can spend up to £10,000 without notifying the Electoral Commission.
- We can spend more than £10,000 only if we submit a notification and then become a registered non-party campaigner. By doing this, the Centre will also appear on the register of notifications. We must also follow the laws on including imprints on election material.
- More than £20,000 in England or £10,000 in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland. At this point, we must abide by legal spending limits and reporting requirements. We must also follow the laws on including imprints on election material.

Template non-party campaigner tests

Made available to the public

This test is probably met if something is publicly available, for instance on:

- Social media
- Billboards
- Websites
- Action days
- Promotional material

The test is not met if:

- It is only shared with an internal mailing list.
- A press release is only shared with media outlets but not released to the public, such as on a website.

Call to action to voters

It probably does meet the test if the call to action includes:

- A call to action to voters to vote in a particular way, either implicitly or explicitly.
- Mentioning candidates and parties around an issue you are campaigning on, such as fracking, in a way that may cause voters to take into account their candidates' position on fracking when casting their vote.
- A campaign that explicitly promotes particular parties or candidates, or implicitly promotes certain political parties or candidates over others.

It likely does not meet the test if the call to action is:

- A public campaign without an explicit or implicit call to action to voters.
- Lobby candidates, politicians, and political parties.
- Trying to influence political parties to adopt policies generally or in their manifestos.
- Trying to change the general debate around a topic or issue.
- A campaign for or against government legislation
- Signing a petition against planning applications
- If a union tried to influence its members to vote a certain way on an industrial action ballot.

Tone

The first step is identifying whether you mention parties, candidates, or any particular policy.

It probably does meet the test if:

- Identifying in any way a group of candidates as agreeing or disagreeing with you on a particular policy, such as their name appearing on an interactive map or being positive about candidates who have signed a pledge, especially if a lot of those candidates come from a specific party.
- If you welcome a proposal from a party leader regarding their role as leader of that party.

It likely does not meet the test if:

- It is positive or negative about a particular policy, but is not positive or negative about particular parties or candidates.
- If your campaign does not mention candidates, parties, or elections, then your spending is less likely to be regulated

Context and timing

It probably does meet the test if:

- You welcome a policy announcement which is in the context of the election and their party's manifesto.
- You campaign on a policy that is effectively a shorthand for a particular party in your campaign.
- It is in the regulated period of an election and is aimed at influencing the election.
- A campaign that starts close to the date of an election is more likely to meet the test.

It likely does not meet the test if:

- The organisation has been campaigning on the issue for a long period, not just during an election or referendum or is an ongoing campaign.
- The policy is not a clear dividing line between parties in the public mind. This is helped when all parties have significant or overlapping policies on the issue, and you do not have a position that sides with a very distinctive stance only taken by one party. It also matters how close the issue is to a party. If you are campaigning around an issue such as "immigration" it is unlikely to meet the test, but if you focused on "Immigration from the EU" it would be too similar to a party like UKIP. The same could be said for the difference between the "dementia tax", which would be linked to the Conservative policy on the issue and speaking more widely about "social care".
- Other parties are also likely to add the policy you are campaigning for or against to their manifestos.
- If you welcome a particular policy, you would also welcome other announcements around the same policy if another party supported it.
- We have campaigned against that policy in the past when other parties have been in power, for instance, on an issue like NHS pay.

How a reasonable person would see the activity

Using the above template sections, look at how a reasonable person would see the activity.

Ensuring these measures are kept up to date. These measures will be reviewed once a year.

Availability of these measures. To ensure these measures are accessible to those who may need to consult them, this document will be available on our website. A copy of this policy will also be sent to every member of the Centre when it is updated via email.

Have any ideas to make this document better? Let us know by submitting any ideas on the “Contact” page of our website.

Centre

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