

Report on charities campaigning in the run-up to the 2015 General Election

06 JANUARY 2016

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CATEGORY:
ARTICLE

CLIENT TYPES:
CHARITIES AND NON-PROFIT

The Charity Commission has published its case report into campaigning and political issues arising in the run-up to the 2015 General Election! The Commission expressly highlights that the report only considers the charity law position, rather than the position under electoral law (and in particular the Lobbying Act 2014).

Under charity law, charities are able to engage in campaigning and political activities to further their purposes and which they can justify. Often campaigning can be a valuable and effective way for charities to help their beneficiaries. However, charities must maintain their independence and must never engage in party political activity.

During the 9 month period before the 2015 General Election (September 2014 to 7 May 2015), the Charity Commission dealt with 17 cases relating to concerns about non-compliance by charities. Most were not considered serious breaches of guidance and were dealt with promptly.

22 further complaints were raised with the Charity Commission but these were considered to not require regulatory action or were requests for advice from charities. Certain of these related to candidates or the media using information from or about charities in their materials, without the charity's consent, which caused a perception that the charity endorsed the candidate or party.

Considering the issues raised, it appears that many occurred because charities (and all of their trustees, staff and volunteers) were not aware of the Charity Commission's guidance on campaigning and political activity. For example, several charities displayed posters in favour of a particular candidate at charity premises or tweeted political messages. Several charities were also inadvertently linked with a candidate's campaign through a character reference or a photo of a charity official being included in a candidate's manifesto.

The full report is available [here](#).

The Charity Commission's guidance on campaigning and political activity is available [here](#).

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