

Client: The Legal Education Foundation
Matter: Election Advice Note – Northern Ireland Perspective

This guidance note has been prepared to set out the general principles of charity law and election law specific to Northern Ireland. The Charity Commission for Northern Ireland (“CCNI”) has prepared guidance entitled *Charities and politics*. This guidance can be found using the following [link](#).

The guiding principle of charity law is that charities must remain independent of party politics. Whilst a charity can attempt to raise awareness on important issues and influence public opinion in relation to policy, it must never engage in political activity and must not encourage the electorate to vote for one party or another.

The principles set out in the guidance prepared by Stone King LLP are generally the same in Northern Ireland in relation to the UK Parliamentary General Election. We have set out differences below.

Activities where spending is Regulated by the Electoral Commission

Examples of regulated activities include:

- Press conferences;
- Producing or publishing election material;
- Canvassing and market research; and
- Public rallies and events.

In Northern Ireland, there is a specific exclusion for public processions or protest meetings where notice has been given under the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. If a notice has been given under this legislation, events are regulated by the Parades Commission and therefore do not fall within the definition of regulated activity. Charity law requirements must still apply to the charity when engaging in this activity.

Regulated Period

The regulated period for a UK General Election is 365 days for the whole of the UK including Northern Ireland. The regulated period for Northern Ireland Assembly Elections is four months leading up to the election.

Threshold for Registration with the Electoral Commission

The threshold for registration in Northern Ireland is £10,000 including staff costs, publicity and support.

Edwards & Co. Solicitors
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