

Name
Position
Party

Our reference: xxxxx
By email to: xxxxx

30 May 2024

Dear Name,

Following the Prime Minister's announcement of a General Election on 04 July, I am writing to each of the major UK political parties, to remind them of my Office's guidance for the use of personal data in political campaigning.

Political parties have a vital role to play in the UK democratic process and it is of critical importance that they can communicate effectively with potential voters. It is equally important that all those involved in political campaigning use personal data in a way that is transparent, understood by people and lawful.

The guidance supports campaigners to maximise the societal benefits of greater democratic engagement that digital campaigning confers; and at the same time provides confidence to voters that they are engaging in a process that is transparent and safeguards their right to know how their personal information is being used.

The guidance explains and clarifies data protection and electronic marketing laws. It also provides practical tips and useful examples on ways campaigners can comply with their obligations whilst carrying out common campaigning activities.

For ease of reference, it may be helpful for me to draw your attention to five particularly important requirements in the guidance. Campaigning political parties must:

- ☐ follow data protection and electronic marketing laws both before, during, and after the regulated period.
- ☐ ensure that they provide individuals with clear and accessible information about how they are using personal data including inferred data. This includes data obtained directly from individuals and that which is obtained from third parties, including data brokers. Additionally, parties must take steps to make individuals aware of how their personal data is shared with social media platforms for the purposes of targeted political advertising.
- ☐ be able to demonstrate compliance with the law and be able to demonstrate that any third parties used to process personal data – including data analytics providers and online campaigning platforms – similarly comply.
- ☐ ensure that they have the appropriate records of consent from individuals, where required, to send political messages through electronic channels (calls, texts, emails).
- ☐ identify conditions for processing special category data. Political opinions and ethnicity are two such special categories.

BCC Data Breaches

In addition to the information provided above on political campaigning, I also wanted to take this opportunity to highlight an area which remains a concern to my office, and that is the use of CC/BCC. Across the whole economy, failure to use BCC remains one of the most frequently reported breaches, and during the recent local elections we saw it be an issue for political parties and MPs. So, I am taking this opportunity to highlight the guidance¹ from my office from last year on the use of BCC and call on you as the data protection representatives of your organisations to work to prevent these breaches through the election period.

¹ <https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/media-centre/news-and-blogs/2023/08/ico-publishes-new-guidance-on-sending-bulk-communications-by-email/>

If there is anything that you would like to discuss further in relation to the guidance or political campaigning practices, please get in touch with my dedicated team leading this work at PGAParliament@ico.org.uk.

Yours sincerely



John Edwards
UK Information Commissioner