

Conduct in and around Polling Stations

Returning Officer Guidance for Candidates, Agents, Tellers and Campaigners Local Election - 7 May 2026

Key Principles

- Follow the Electoral Commission's Code of Conduct for Campaigners.
 - Treat all voters respectfully and avoid any behaviour that could be perceived as intimidating.
 - Presiding Officers, Polling Station Inspectors and the Returning Officer have authority to enforce these rules.
 - These requirements apply to all candidates, agents, tellers and campaigners, whether representing a political party or standing independently.
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Polling Place vs Polling Station

- **Polling Station:** The room where voting takes place and the ballot box is located.
 - **Polling Place:** The entire site designated for voting (building, car park, grounds).
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Campaigners

- **Permitted:**
 - ✓ Wearing party rosettes (no slogans such as "Vote for..."; not oversized).
 - ✓ Approaching voters more than 50 metres from the polling place in a respectful and non-intrusive manner.
 - **Not Permitted:**
 - ✗ Any political activity within 50 metres of the polling place boundary (or any alternative distance specified by the Returning Officer).
 - ✗ Groups of more than three campaigners (including the candidate and agent) within 50 metres of the polling place.
 - ✗ Distributing political literature within 50 metres of the polling place.
 - ✗ Parking vehicles displaying political material within 50 metres of the polling place.
 - ✗ Using loudspeakers or similar equipment within 50 metres of the polling place.
 - ✗ Entering the polling station while wearing rosettes.
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Tellers

- **Role:**
 - May ask voters **leaving** the polling station (not entering) for their electoral number or address.
 - Must clearly explain their purpose if asked.
 - Must not campaign or attempt to influence voters.
- **Tellers Conduct:**
 - Only one teller per party/independent candidate per polling place.
 - Request information politely, must not demand it.
 - Share data with other tellers to avoid repeated approaches to voters.
 - May wear party rosettes (no slogans such as "Vote for..."; not oversized).
 - Remove rosettes before entering the polling station to vote or assist a voter.
 - Communication with campaigners must occur outside the 50-metre zone.

Enforcement

- **Breaches may result in:**

- Tellers being instructed to stop collecting numbers.
- Individuals being required to move beyond the polling place boundary (onto the public highway).
- Serious or repeated breaches being referred to the Police.

By signing this protocol, candidates, agents, tellers and campaigners commit to:

- ✓ Support a free, fair and safe election.
- ✓ Comply with the law and Electoral Commission guidance.
- ✓ Report allegations appropriately.
- ✓ Ensure supporters comply with this code of conduct.
- ✓ Avoid behaviour that may appear intimidating or coercive.
- ✓ Respect the 50 metre no campaigning zone around polling places.

Name:

Role / Party:

Ward (if candidate):

Signed:

Date:

Clarification on the 50-Metre Boundary

To support a calm and non-intimidating environment, the Returning Officer has introduced an approximate 50-metre no-campaigning zone around each polling place. This is an operational measure, not a statutory rule, and must be followed in the same way as any other instruction issued by the Returning Officer to ensure the proper conduct of the poll. The boundary will not be physically marked, it is an approximate distance, and campaigners are expected to use their judgement to remain well away from the entrance to the polling place.

If campaigners challenge or ignore the requirements, Presiding Officers or Polling Station Inspectors will remind them that the boundary forms part of the Returning Officer's conditions for maintaining order around the polling place. Individuals may be instructed to move further away. Persistent refusal, or behaviour that escalates to intimidation, obstruction or disorder may be referred to the Police.

The 50-metre zone is designed to minimise perception of intimidation and ensure voters can access the polling station freely.