



Note to Broadcasters – Election programming in the election periods for the by-elections taking place on 18 June 2026

Election programming

On 18 June 2026 there will be UK Parliamentary by-elections in: Aberdeen South; Arbroath and Broughty Ferry; and Makerfield.

Ofcom reminds all broadcasters that they must comply with the rules for election-related programming – in particular [Section Five](#) (Due Impartiality)¹ and [Section Six](#) (Elections and Referendums)² of the Broadcasting Code (“the Code”). Broadcasters should also note the prohibition on political advertising contained in section 321 of the Communications Act 2003 and reflected in Section 7 of the UK Code of Broadcast Advertising (BCAP Code).

As noted in paragraph 1.5 of Ofcom’s electoral digest published on 19 February 2026 ([‘Evidence of past electoral support and evidence of current support ahead of the various elections taking place on 7 May 2026’](#)): “Should other elections occur before the publication in early 2027 of Ofcom’s next electoral digest, e.g. by-elections, it is open to broadcasters to make reference to this digest in helping to frame their decisions. It might also be necessary in such circumstances for broadcasters to assess any more recent evidence that may be relevant”.

Broadcasters should also refer to [Ofcom’s previous Note to Broadcasters on election programming, published on 23 February 2026](#).

The rules in Section Six of the Code will apply when Ofcom defines the ‘election period(s)’ to have commenced. We have taken account of all relevant information and discussed this matter with the specialist elections regulator – the Electoral Commission – with which Ofcom is under a statutory duty³ to consult when setting rules in the area of elections.

¹ See also Ofcom’s published [Guidance to Section Five](#).

² See also Ofcom published [Guidance to Section Six](#).

³ See section 93 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended).

For the purposes of the Code, for the 18 June 2026 parliamentary by-elections Ofcom has determined that the start of the election period was:

- Monday 18 May 2026* in the case of the Aberdeen South and Arbroath and Broughty Ferry by-elections; and
- Tuesday 19 May 2026* in the case of the Makerfield by-election.

In each case, the election period ends with the close of the poll.

If a complaint raises a potentially substantive due impartiality issue about any election-related programming (both news and non-news) during the election periods which Ofcom considers might require redress before the election, it may be necessary for Ofcom to act quickly to determine the outcome in a proportionate and transparent manner before the election. Broadcasters should therefore be prepared to engage with Ofcom on short timescales.

Ofcom will consider any breach arising from election-related programming to be potentially serious and will consider taking appropriate regulatory action, which could include the imposition of a statutory sanction.

* Updated 26 May 2026 at 13:30