



Note to Broadcasters – Election programming in the election period for the by-election taking place on 8 October 2026

Election programming

On Thursday 8 October 2026 there will be a UK Parliamentary by-election in Holborn and St Pancras.

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 set out 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”.

Additionally, in its [Decision published on 12 June 2026](#), Ofcom’s Election Committee recognised the fast-changing, dynamic political landscape and reminded all broadcasters that **“during any election period, broadcasters need to keep under review relevant new evidence of current electoral support to ensure that due weight and an appropriate amount of coverage is given to political parties”**.

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

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

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

The election period and Ofcom's procedures

The rules in Section Six of the Code apply when Ofcom determines that the election period has started. We have considered all relevant information, and Ofcom has determined that the start date of the election period was **Monday 7 September 2026**. The election period ends with the close of the poll.

If a complaint raises a potentially substantive due impartiality issue in election-related programming (whether news or non-news) during the election period 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.