



Reference: FOI1179

**Request:**

1. Please can you confirm whether you currently have any policy in which relates to the safety and security of parliamentary and local candidates in elections? If so, please provide a copy.
2. Details of the number of incidents reported to yourselves which relate to parliamentary or local candidates being assaulted or abused for the past three years? (This can include events relating to physical and non physical incidents).
3. Confirm whether the authority plans to provide advice and/or guidance on safety and security on which parliamentary or local candidates can access in the future?
4. Confirm that the authority takes it 'duty of care' towards local and parliamentary candidates seriously and if so provide details which confirm reasonable adjustments and/or steps have been taken to properly advise prospective candidates on such matters.

**Response:**

**1. Please can you confirm whether you currently have any policy in which relates to the safety and security of parliamentary and local candidates in elections? If so, please provide a copy.**

We do not have a specific policy as circumstances may change from one election to another. However, for every election we do ensure that candidates are advised of any guidance on safety and security provided by the Cabinet Office, the Police or the Electoral Commission as appropriate.

For example, the National Police Chiefs Council, working with the Crown Prosecution Service and the Electoral Commission, have recently produced two guidance documents for candidates and campaigners, to help candidates understand when behaviour goes beyond political debate and may be unlawful.

There is a short guide called 'When things go too far' (NPCC A4 Leaflet) which provides general advice, and a longer 'Joint guidance for candidates in elections' which provides more detail as to the nature of possible offences. If candidates feel that behaviour towards them may be unlawful or are concerned for their safety or that of others, they should always contact the police.

We also refer candidates to the Electoral Commission's website where useful information can be obtained by candidates about a variety of different types of election.

In addition, following the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL)'s review of intimidation in public life, we welcomed legislation that came into force earlier this year to

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enable candidates at local elections to withhold their home addresses on the statement of persons nominated and ballot papers. The local election held on 2 May 2019 was the first time candidates were able to choose not to publish home addresses on ballot papers.

**2. Details of the number of incidents reported to yourselves which relate to parliamentary or local candidates being assaulted or abused for the past three years? (This can include events relating to physical and non physical incidents).**

None.

**3. Confirm whether the authority plans to provide advice and/or guidance on safety and security on which parliamentary or local candidates can access in the future?**

We will continue to share with candidates any advice and guidance received from the Cabinet Office, the Police or the Electoral Commission as referred to in Q 1 above.

**4. Confirm that the authority takes it 'duty of care' towards local and parliamentary candidates seriously and if so provide details which confirm reasonable adjustments and/or steps have been taken to properly advise prospective candidates on such matters.**

We do take issues around the safety and security of election candidates very seriously. As referred to above, we will continue to share with candidates any advice and guidance received from the Cabinet Office, the Police or the Electoral Commission. In addition, we liaise closely with the Police in relation to all elections, and in relation to those elections, for which we are directly responsible, we provide candidates' briefings which are attended by the police and these give them the opportunity to discuss any safety or security issues directly with the candidates.