

**02 March 2026**

## **Guidance on pre-election sensitivity and implications for promoting the Youth Investment Fund and Better Youth Spaces**

Please note that this guidance only covers what the pre-election period of sensitivity means for promoting the Youth Investment Fund and Better Youth Spaces. If you require more detailed information about what this means for your organisation's campaigning and lobbying activity, please refer to the [NCVO guidance](#).

**Read the information carefully, especially if you are planning any event or communication that relates to your YIF or BYS funding during the period of heightened sensitivity.**

**Note:** While this guidance focuses on the legal requirements during an election period, organisations in more contested areas should also consider how heightened tensions and polarisation may affect them as recipients of government funding. You can continue to organise events and communicate about your YIF or BYS funding in line with the guidance below, but in some cases, it might be wise to wait until after the election.

### **What is the period of pre-election sensitivity?**

The pre-election period of sensitivity occurs in the weeks leading up to local and general elections or a referendum and is referred to as a period of heightened sensitivity.

### **Spring Elections 2026**

Elections are scheduled to take place in England on **Thursday 7 May 2026**.

These are:

- County, district, metropolitan and unitary council elections
- London borough councils
- Directly elected mayors
- Some other local elections

A searchable list of any upcoming elections in your local area can be found on [the Electoral Commission website](#).

The exact start of the pre-election period in your area is determined by when the local authority in question formally declares it. The latest the pre-election period could begin in local areas where there are local elections (i.e. the latest date at which an election can be declared) is **Tuesday 31 March 2026**.

The convention observed **by national organisations** is different to those observed locally. For national organisations, the pre-election period begins three weeks before the scheduled local elections. In this case, the period begins on **Thursday 16 April 2026**.

## **When does this apply to my organisation?**

If you plan on issuing any communications regarding your YIF or BYS funding **between now and 31 March**, we recommend checking your council or borough websites for a 'Notice of Election' page before publishing any content.

From **Tuesday 31 March to 7 May 2026** you should assume you are within the pre-election period of sensitivity.

## **What does this mean for promoting the YIF or BYS grant programmes and grantees who have received funding?**

Promoting the Youth Investment Fund or Better Youth Spaces during the pre-election period of sensitivity in the run up to the elections could be perceived as politically motivated, so it's important to carefully consider any activity during this period.

Any activity can be considered 'regulated activity' if a reasonable person would regard the activity as intending to influence voters to vote in a particular way at an upcoming election. As YIF and BYS are government funding programmes, there is a risk promoting that funding could be perceived as supporting, or showing preference towards, a particular political party or parties.

We recommend that all partners and grant apply caution when promoting YIF or BYS during the pre-election period of sensitivity. This includes publicising opening events, new newsletter content, media interviews, social media content and other forms of publicity.

Existing content on your website and channels can remain in place.

You can continue to promote your Youth investment Fund or Better Youth Spaces funded project as usual from **8 May 2026** onwards.

## **Guidance for Announcements, Openings, Launch Events or other YIF and BYS related communications**

We are aware that some Youth Investment Fund and Better Youth Spaces projects are planning opening events, announcements or other events during the pre-election period of sensitivity (**31 March (or sooner) to 7 May 2026**).

### **New MMC YIF grant announcements**

If you have just had your YIF grant approved and have not yet made an announcement, please hold back on making a public announcement about your grant during the period of heightened pre-election sensitivity between **31 March (or sooner) to 7 May 2026**. You can make your announcement from **8 May onwards**.

### **If you have a planned launch event, including an opening event**

We appreciate that a lot of work goes into planning communications and launch events. If you have not yet started planning a launch event, we recommend organising your event for after the period of pre-election sensitivity. Starting any new plans for events during this period could be considered as timed for the election.

If you have already begun plans for your event, you can go ahead with your launch. However, you should not invite politicians (MPs, councillors etc), nor mention or show preference to any politicians, candidates or political parties (eg "thanks to this government's support" or "Labour's Better Youth Spaces" or "thanks to the hard work of

our local councillors”). This applies to any of your communications, including press releases, speeches, social media content, invites and press interviews.

Please read the guidance below:

**If you have a planned event between now and 31 March, check your local council / borough website beforehand, to check if the ‘Notice of Election’ has been published.**

**If you have a planned event between 31 March to 7 May 2026 (or after the date the ‘notice of election’ is published), please use the following guidance:**

- Do not invite, or show preference towards, any politicians (MPs, councillors etc), candidates nor mention any politicians or political parties (eg “thanks to this government’s support” or “Labour’s Better Youth Spaces” or “thanks to the hard work of our local councillors”).
- This includes any staff or volunteers with your organisation. If someone associated with your charity is standing in an election or visibly politically active, it’s important the charity remains independent and distinct from that person’s politics. We recommend not quoting them in any communications and not inviting them to your YIF or BYS events, explaining that this is the pre-election period of sensitivity.
- Do not mention that your project has received Government funding. Instead, say that the youth centre is funded through a large capital grant from YIF or BYS.
- Review your communications and events plans to make sure nothing could be perceived as supporting a particular candidate, party, elected body, or be considered to influence anyone’s votes directly or indirectly.
- If journalists press you, you can just say that the opening is happening during the pre-election period of sensitivity, and you are observing this in relation to your funding and communications. You can say that you can share more information once the elections have concluded.
- Do not say that the funding is a secret, just stress that the launch is happening during the period of sensitivity in the run up to the elections.
- You can talk openly about government and council support for your Youth Investment Fund or Better Youth Spaces funding **from 8 May 2026**.

## **Additional Guidance**

The Electoral Commission has a [helpful explanation on how they assess any activity](#).

The Charity Commission has a guide on [Political Activity and Campaigning by charities](#).

NHS England has published some [useful pre-election sensitivity guidance](#).

## **Further support**

If you have any concerns about how to manage your communications during the period of sensitivity, please speak to your Relationship Manager or contact Jack Wakefield or Myra Johnson at Social Investment Business:

Jack Wakefield: [jack.wakefield@sibgroup.org.uk](mailto:jack.wakefield@sibgroup.org.uk)

Myra Johnson: [myra.johnson@sibgroup.org.uk](mailto:myra.johnson@sibgroup.org.uk)