

DDA Guide to Purdah

What is “Purdah”?

‘Purdah’ or ‘the pre-election period’ refers to the weeks preceding a general election when specific restrictions apply principally around the activity of those working in central and local government. Its purpose is to prevent announcements and activities by public bodies which could influence or be seen to influence the election.



Who does it apply to it?

In recent years NHS England has sought to influence general practice and apply purdah restrictions. However, general practice and general practitioners are not covered by the restrictions.

Primarily, it applies to civil servants, ministers and MPs (note that in this context, executive agencies like Public Health England, NHS England and the UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (formerly Public Health England) are treated as part of central government). Whilst it does not apply directly to non-departmental public bodies (like ICS), in previous elections there has been a strong steer that such bodies should apply the principles of the Cabinet Office guidance. It is anticipated that NHS England, will issue such a steer to NHS bodies.

Ahead of the 2024 general election on July 4, Parliament will be suspended today (Friday 24 May), before being formally shut down on Thursday 30 May. The purdah period typically begins once the UK Parliament has been dissolved and will last until the new Government is formed.

Good practice

Although GPs are not affected by purdah restrictions, you may wish to consider the following ‘good’ practices:

- No activity should be undertaken which could be considered politically controversial or influential, which could compete for public attention or

which could be identified with a party/candidate/designated campaign group.

- Would you do the same for everyone? Demonstrate the same approach for every political party, official candidate and designated campaign groups in order to avoid allegations of bias or pre-judging the electorate and ensure providers are able to form a constructive relationship with whoever wins the seat
- The NHS will be under the media spotlight, locally and nationally. Be ready for your practice to be contacted by local journalists.

Further reading [Londonwide LMCs](#)