

Questions on the requirement to join the Register of Consultant Lobbyists

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1. When should I join the Register?

[The transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014](#) (the Act) states that there is a prohibition on conducting the business of consultant lobbying without first joining the Register of Consultant Lobbyists. This prohibition comes in to effect with the launch of the Register.

You can join the Register at any point in the year, as long as it is **before conducting the business of consultant lobbying or receiving payment to do so at a later date.**

2. When do I make a quarterly return?

When you first join the Register you need to declare your clients for the “pre-registration quarter”: this is the period of three months ending on the date that you applied to join the Register. You will have two weeks from the point of joining the Register to do this.

All subsequent returns must be submitted within two weeks of the end of a quarter.

3. Does the Register apply to those in devolved countries?

The requirement to register applies to any organisation that meets the criteria of consultant lobbying outlined in the [guidance](#) and is VAT registered, regardless of where the lobbying takes place or where the consultant lobbyist is based.

Consultant lobbying means communicating with Ministers of the UK Government, Permanent Secretaries or equivalents; organisations that only lobby officials of devolved administrations are not required to register.

4. Who are Government Ministers?

A Minister of the Crown is defined by the act as being “the holder of an office in the government.” You can find a full list of Ministerial responsibilities here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-ministers-and-responsibilities>

5. Should I register if I communicate with a Minister about local (constituency) issues?

Communications with a Minister only need to be registered if they relate to matters of Her Majesty's Government; this does not include matters relating to Local Government. An example might be writing to a constituency MP about a local planning issue.

However, in the instance that a planning issue is 'called in' to the level of Secretary of State, any communications at this point would need to be registered as they involve matters of Her Majesty's Government.

Whether or not the Minister is acting as a constituency MP or not is not the issue in this circumstance. It is the subject of the communications and whether they relate to issues of HM Government policy, legislation, financial arrangement or business.

6. Should I register if I draft a communication (e.g. a letter) for a client but do not communicate with the Minister personally?

Carrying on the business of consultant lobbying as defined by the Act means communicating with a Minister directly. In the case that you have drafted communications for a client to send, this would not be an act that requires registration as no direct communication has taken place.

However, if the situation was reversed, and a client drafted a communication (concerning government policy, legislation, the award of contracts, grants licences or similar benefits, or the exercise of any other government function) which you have sent to a Minister personally, **this would require registration**. This is because direct communication has taken place.

7. Am I required to Register if I talk to the Minister at a social event and I do not mention a client or lobby for policy change?

The act states that communications that require registration are those that are **relating to** the subjects listed above, as such it does not matter if you don't mention the client name or lobby for a specific change. You would be required to register if you are being paid by a client to communicate with a Minister or Permanent Secretary and make communications relating to policy, legislation etc. in the course of that business.

8. What if I try to organise a meeting with the Minister or invite a Minister to an event?

The key issue is the subject matter of the communication and whom you are communicating with. Communications that require registration relate to government policy, legislation, the award of contracts, grants licences or similar benefits, or the exercise of any other government function.

Communications with a member of a private office are **not covered by the Act**. If an organisation was to write to a Minister's private secretary to invite the Minister to a meeting this would not require registration. However if the organisation were to write to the Minister by name, title,

or to an email or social media account owned by the Minister this may require registration.

Inviting a Minister or Permanent Secretary (or equivalents) to a meeting or event will not trigger the requirement to register in of itself unless it involves the subjects above and is made of behalf of a paying client. An example might be issuing an invitation to a Minister for a meeting which also contains text that relates to Government policy or legislation – **this would require registration.**

9. What if at an event a client talks to a Minister but I don't make any communications?

You are only required to register if you are the one making communications in the course of the business of consultant lobbying, organisations do not have to join the Register for any communications their clients make.

10. Organisations sometimes conduct campaigning activity on behalf of MPs and their employees may use annual or unpaid leave to do this activity. If an employee is on annual or unpaid leave, do communications with a Minister mean the employer should register?

In this case, the question would be whether a third-party client is paying the employer for these communications to be made on their behalf. If a client is paying the employer for communications to be made that involve matters of government policy, legislation etc., then this activity would have to be registered whether the employee is on annual leave or not.

If the employee is seconded to a MP's office and communicates with a Minister as part of the business of the MP's office, this activity **would not require** registration. However, if the employee communicates with Ministers in the course of business conducted on behalf of a paying client, this would require registration.