

## **ADVICE NOTE 1: Due Diligence**

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Issued 20 September 2023

### **Summary**

This document explains the new rule on the relationship between APPGs and foreign governments and provides advice to APPG Officers who are responsible for undertaking due diligence to ascertain whether the ultimate funder of any benefit to the APPG is a foreign government.

It has been prepared by the Parliamentary Security Department and the Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

### **New rule on the relationship between APPGs and foreign governments**

1. Further to the House's approval of the Committee on Standards' report on All Party Parliamentary Groups (APPGs) a new rule will come into effect on 16 October 2023 prohibiting APPGs from accepting secretariat services that are either provided or funded by a foreign government. The relevant rule states:

**A[n All Parliamentary Party] Group must not accept the provision of a secretariat by a foreign government, nor may they accept the services of a secretariat funded by a foreign government. A Group's officers must undertake due diligence as to whether a foreign government is the eventual funder of a secretariat or other benefit.**

2. The rule does not prevent APPGs from receiving other benefits funded by foreign governments (such as the funding of a dinner co-hosted by the APPG and a foreign embassy).
3. The rule does, however, require APPG Officers to undertake due diligence to ascertain whether the ultimate funder of any benefit – secretariat services or otherwise – is a foreign government. If it is, and the value of the benefit meets the threshold for registration, the benefit will need to be registered in the normal way as having been received from the foreign government.
4. This rule is in addition to an APPG's obligation to register financial benefits, regardless of origin.
5. APPGs receiving outside financial benefits **in excess of £1,500 in a calendar year** are required to publish an annual report explaining their work and **a due diligence statement in relation to foreign government funding.**

## **Advice to APPG Officers undertaking due diligence**

6. When conducting due diligence, APPG Officers should ask themselves at each stage of their enquiries whether their due diligence is of a standard reasonably likely to elicit the relevant information: that is, whether the secretariat services or other benefit offered to the APPG is/are ultimately funded by a foreign government.
7. APPG Officers should ask the provider of the benefit to the APPG (whether an individual, group, company, charity or other organisation) clear, direct and unambiguous questions in writing, and require written answers in the form of an assurance statement, to provide a clear record of information sought and provided.

### ***Suggested Questions***

If the benefit provided to the APPG is secretariat or secretariat services:

- *Who are the individuals forming or working for the secretariat? What other responsibilities do they have, and are they working for, or on behalf of, a foreign government?*
  - *Are the individuals in the secretariat paid, employed, or voluntary? If they are employed or paid, by whom, and who is funding them?*
  - *If the secretariat is provided by a company or group, how is that company or group funded?*
  - *Is any person involved in the secretariat funded, directly or indirectly, by any foreign government?*
8. Recipients of APPG Officers' due diligence enquiries who are hesitant, ambiguous, confused or unsure about their own sources of funding, should be asked to seek the answers to these questions, and refusal or inability to do so should be flagged in the APPG Officers' due diligence reporting. (See paragraph 15 below).

### ***Conduct basic research in publicly available sources***

9. APPG Officers should take reasonable steps to verify information provided by respondents to due diligence questioning. Further assurance can be provided by conducting some basic research using publicly available sources of information.
10. APPG Officers should request details of the online presence (e.g. website, social media channels) of the individual, group or company providing the statement as part of the statement of assurance (above), and inform them that reviewing these will form part of the APPG's due diligence check.
11. A variety of search engines are available and it is good practice to conduct searches in more than one, as search engines prioritise results in different ways.

Search Engines:

Google, Bing, DuckDuckGo, Dogpile, Yahoo Search.

You can also find archived content at [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)

### **Suggested questions to resolve through searching publicly available sources**

- *Does the company, group or individual providing the secretariat, the funding for the secretariat, or other benefit, have a website, or other publicly available online presence? Does this state or imply a link to any foreign government?*
- *Does the company, group or individual providing the secretariat appear in press stories, or on other websites or other openly available social media sites, in connection to foreign governments, now or in the past?*
- *Are they registered in the UK? Do the registered officers of the company tell you anything about its ownership or links to foreign governments?*
- *If the secretariat is provided by a company, what information is available with Companies House<sup>1</sup>?*

Most social media sites will allow you to search for other users with publicly available profiles on their platforms without having an account; alternatively a web browser search with the subject name and platform (“Any Charity Twitter”) is likely to identify a publicly available profile.

Key social media platforms to check could include X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok.

Connections to TikTok are prohibited from Parliamentary devices or the Parliamentary network, but can be conducted on personal devices over a 4G connection.

12. APPG Officers undertaking due diligence should observe data protection considerations when conducting online research: see *Appendix 5 (Data protection and APPGs) of the [Guide to the Rules on All-Party Parliamentary Groups](#)*.

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<sup>1</sup> [Get information about a company - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk).

## Due Diligence Checklist

13. To support APPG Officers to conduct reasonable due diligence checks, the table below summarises the advice above and can be used as a checklist.

14. This checklist may be used as the due diligence statement required to be published at an AGM by APPGs that have met the threshold to have an external chair.

Name of APPG:	
Secretariat Assurance Statement	
All members of the secretariat are fully identified.	
I [APPG Officer undertaking due diligence] understand who else the secretariat members work for and their external responsibilities.	
I know whether the secretariat members are paid or remunerated, and if so, by whom.	
They have confirmed they are not part of, working for or funded by a foreign government.	
Where a group, charity, company, etc, is providing or finding the secretariat, I know how that entity is funded.	
The group, charity or organisation has stated it is not funded, directly or indirectly, by a foreign government.	
Online Research	
Individual, group or company providing secretariat has a publicly available online presence.	
Individual, group or company appears elsewhere online (e.g. news articles, blogs) linked to a foreign government.	
Online presence does not confirm or infer a link to a foreign government, now or in the past.	
If appropriate, Companies House checks have been conducted and results considered.	
Signed:	Role of Member in the APPG

## How To Raise Concerns

15. If APPG Officers' due diligence activities identify foreign government provision or funding of secretariats, or raise concerns about foreign governmental interference in the working of the Group, APPG Officers should email the Parliamentary Security Department at [securityrisk@parliament.uk](mailto:securityrisk@parliament.uk) in the first instance to ensure the awareness of relevant Parliamentary authorities, and to obtain support and advice as appropriate.
  
16. It is also advisable to inform the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards at [standardscommissioner@parliament.uk](mailto:standardscommissioner@parliament.uk) who monitors the operation and effectiveness of the APPG rules.