



BRIEFING PAPER

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UK by-elections since 1975 held more than 3 months after vacancy

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A by-election takes place in the House of Commons when a seat becomes vacant, either through the Member of Parliament dying or resigning the seat. This list notes by-elections that have taken place more than three months after the vacancy.

Moving the writ for a by-election

A writ must be moved in the House of Commons to trigger each by-election that takes place. It is customary for a member of the party which previously held the seat to move the writ. Normally, this takes place not long after the seat becomes vacant, so that the seat's constituents are not left without representation in the House for longer than necessary. Occasionally, however, there may be a significant delay between the vacancy and the by-election, or the vacancy and the issuing of the writ.

It is also possible for the Speaker to issue a writ during a recess period. When this occurs, the Speaker informs the House when it next sits.

Must a writ be moved?

There is nothing in statute law or in Standing Orders obliging the House to move a writ for a by-election. It could choose to leave the seat without representation until the next General Election (General Elections must be held every five years). One of the by-elections listed, North-West Leicestershire, was left vacant until the 2010 General Election some five months later.

Cancellation of a by-election

There is no statutory provision for the cancellation of a by-election if a general election is called that supersedes the date of the by-election. It is for the acting returning officer to cancel the by-election. Following a snap general election in 1923 the returning officer, acting on advice from the Home Office, cancelled the outstanding Warwick and Leamington by-election. More recently, the Manchester Gorton by-election was superseded by the 2017 snap general election. The House passed a motion on 20 April 2017 confirming that the by-election writ for Manchester Gorton should be superseded [HC Deb 624 c826].

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Further information

[UK parliamentary by-elections since 1945](#) lists the number of by-elections by session and by parliament in Table 1. Table 2 provides the results of each by-election since 2005 together with the reason for the by-election.

Detailed information on by-elections since 2010, including the number of votes cast and percentage share, can be found on the [by-elections pages of the Parliament website](#).

Results for earlier by-elections can be found in the following Commons Library briefings:

- [By-elections since the 1992 general election](#), RP97-32, 3 Mar 1997
- [By-elections results 1997-2000](#), RP01-36, 29 Mar 2001

Feedback

Please send comments or corrections to: [Parliamentary Information Lists Editor](#), Parliament and Constitution Centre, House of Commons, SW1A 0AA.

Suggestions for new lists welcomed.

UK by-elections since 1975 held more than 3 months after vacancy

Constituency	Party holding seat before	Reason for vacancy	Party holding seat after	Date of vacancy	Date of Writ	Date of election	Writ more than 3 months #
Woolwich West	Lab	Death	Con	19-Mar-75	06-Jun-75	26-Jun-75	No
Bournemouth East	Con	Resignation	Con	25-Jul-77	04-Nov-77 *	24-Nov-77	3
Ilford North	Lab	Death	Con	29-Oct-77	10-Feb-78	02-Mar-78	3
Garscadden	Lab	Death	Lab	18-Jan-78	20-Mar-78	13-Apr-78	3
Wycombe	Con	Death	Con	19-Jan-78	07-Apr-78	27-Apr-78	No
Pontrefract and Castleford	Lab	Death	Lab	24-Jun-78	06-Oct-78 *	26-Oct-78	Yes
Clitheroe	Con	Death	Con	26-Oct-78	09-Feb-79	01-Mar-79	Yes
Knutsford	Con	Resignation	Con	06-Nov-78	09-Feb-79	01-Mar-79	Yes
Liverpool (Edgehill)	Lab	Death	Liberal	17-Dec-78	09-Mar-79	29-Mar-79	No
Manchester Central	Lab	Elevation	Lab	11-Jun-79	07-Sep-79	27-Sep-79	No
Fermanagh & South Tyrone	AHB	Death	AHB	05-May-81	28-Jul-81	20-Aug-81	No
Croydon North-West	Con	Death	Lab	19-Jun-81	28-Sep-81 *	22-Oct-81	Yes
Belfast South	UUP	Death	UUP	14-Nov-81	10-Feb-82	04-Mar-82	No
Beaconsfield	Con	Death	Con	27-Feb-82	27-May-82	27-May-82	No
Gower	Lab	Death	Lab	06-Jun-82	19-Aug-82 *	16-Sep-82	No
Southwark, Bermondsey	Lab	Resignation	Liberal	01-Nov-82	31-Jan-83	24-Feb-83	No
Staffordshire Mid	Con	Death	Lab	19-Dec-89	28-Feb-89	22-Mar-90	No
Upper Bann	UUP	Death	UUP	12-Feb-90	24-Apr-90	17-May-90	No
Knowsley South	Lab	Death	Lab	25-Jun-90	06-Sep-90	27-Sep-90	No
Bootle	Lab	Death	Lab	20-Jul-90	17-Oct-90	08-Nov-90	No
Bradford North	Lab	Death	Lab	06-Aug-90	17-Oct-90	08-Nov-90	No
Ribble Valley	Con	Elevation	LD	04-Dec-90	13-Feb-90	07-Mar-91	No
Rotherham	Lab	Death	Lab	25-Jan-94	13-Apr-94	05-May-94	No
Barking	Lab	Death	Lab	01-Feb-94	17-May-94	09-Jun-94	Yes
Eastleigh	Con	Death	LD	07-Feb-94	17-May-94	09-Jun-94	Yes
Newham North East	Lab	Death	Lab	28-Feb-94	17-May-94	09-Jun-94	No
Perth and Kinross	Con	Death	SNP	19-Feb-95	02-May-95	25-May-95	No
Hemsworth	Lab	Death	Lab	31-Oct-95	09-Jan-96	01-Feb-96	No
South East Staffordshire	Con	Death	Lab	12-Dec-95	12-Mar-96	11-Apr-96	No
Wirral South	Con	Death	Lab	03-Nov-96	03-Feb-97	27-Feb-97	No
Paisley South	Lab	Death	Lab	28-Jul-97	27-Oct-97	06-Nov-97	No
South Antrim	UUP	Death	DUP	27-Apr-00	15-Aug-2000	21-Sep-00	Yes
North-West Leicestershire	Lab/Co-op	Death	Con	26-Dec-09	outstanding at dissolution on 12/04/10 ^		
Glasgow North East	Speaker	Resignation	Lab	21-Jun-09	16-Oct-09	12-Nov-09	No
Belfast West	SF	Resignation	SF	26-Jan-11	16-May-11	09-Jun-11	Yes
Batley and Spen	Lab	Death	Lab	16-Jun-16	15-Sep-16	20-Oct-16	No
Manchester Gorton	Lab	Death	Lab	26-Feb-17	28/03/2017 ¹	08-Jun-17	No

Notes

Writed moved more than three months after the vacancy

* Writ issued during the recess

^ Seat vacant until the General Election

1. Writ for by election cancelled due to GE called for 8 June 2017

Key

AHB - Anti H-Block candidate

Con - Conservative

DUP - Democratic Unionists Party

Ind - Independent

Lab - Labour

SF - Sinn Fein

UUP - Ulster Unionist party

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