

Performance standards for Returning Officers | Electoral Commission Search
Performance standards for Returning Officers You are in the Electoral Registration
Officer section Home Electoral Registration Officer Overview We set standards and
monitor the performance of Returning Officers (ROs) through our performance standards
framework. Performance standards for ROs Together with our guidance and resources,
the performance standards form an important part of our package of support for ROs in
planning for and delivering elections across Great Britain. Performance standards for
ROs - December 2022 Performance standards for ROs Outcome: electoral services are
robust and support the delivery of well-run elections What inputs are needed? RO
understanding and delivery of role and responsibilities Management and oversight of
the delivery of elections, including the range of statutory functions of the RO, and
an understanding of the strategic landscape, including any legislative changes that
will impact on delivery Stakeholder engagement Establish and maintain strong
relationships with key stakeholders Planning Maintain plans for the delivery of
elections, scheduled and unscheduled, ensuring they are kept under review. Resources
Identification and allocation of budget and permanent staffing; and management of
contractors and suppliers What activities are being undertaken? Understanding of
statutory responsibilities Polls are delivered in accordance with legislation,
guidance and directions (where issued) RO knowledge and understanding of role and
responsibilities is developed and maintained, including through training Formal
appointment of deputies, ensuring clear delegations in place and roles are allocated
and understood What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities?
Awareness of guidance and legislation Records of training/meetings attended Evidence
of quality assurance of the whole electoral process Notification of appointment of
deputies Development and maintenance of robust delivery plans Establish project team
to support preparations for and delivery of elections Clear plans in place, with
objectives and success measures Contingency planning to ensure readiness for
unscheduled events Business continuity planning Risk register in place, with risks
monitored and mitigations identified and implemented Recruitment of all necessary
staff and identification of training needs Robust arrangements in place for managing
issues Access appropriate funding What information is needed to understand the impact
of our activities? Clear agendas for and records of project team meetings, to support
focus on outcomes Project planning documentation which is kept under regular review
Evaluation of previous events and identification of lessons learned Analysis of wider
context within which polls are being conducted Succession plans which are regularly
monitored Training needs analysis and records of training Reconciliation of project
costs against available budget Working with contractors and suppliers, both internal
and external Identification of services required of services Contract development
and management of delivery What information is needed to understand the impact of our
activities? Records of formal procurement decisions Contracts in place with all
suppliers, with mechanisms to manage and monitor performance Contract monitoring
tools and escalation mechanisms, including supplier issues logs, risk registers and
assurances of supplier business continuity plans Service level agreements Maintaining
effective relationships with key stakeholders Engagement with key stakeholders on
plans Ongoing engagement with stakeholders throughout the delivery of the polls What
information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Minutes of meetings
with stakeholders Consultation with and feedback from local stakeholders on plans and
election arrangements Assessment of local accessibility requirements and demonstrated
understanding of needs Records of issues or concerns raised by stakeholders and
resolutions implemented Evaluation of feedback from key stakeholders Coordination and

management of the poll (by ROs with a power of direction) Work across local authority boundaries with other ROs to develop guidance and issue directions where necessary to support consistent delivery of polls Engage with local Returning Officers on the arrangements they have in place to deliver the elections in their area What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Plans for communication with local ROs Plans for coordinating and delivering public awareness activity and engaging with electors across the electoral area Arrangements for the collation of results Records of any guidance issued and whether and how the power to issue directions has been used Analysis of post-election feedback What difference is being made? A consistent high-quality experience for electors, candidates and agents Public confidence in and satisfaction with election processes Teams delivering electoral services are supported to effectively deliver electoral processes The RO has the right skills, knowledge and influence to support the effective delivery of the polls How can we determine the success of our work? Events are delivered in accordance with legislation Elections delivered without legal challenge to the administration of the poll Analysis of team resilience, capability and capacity Analysis of feedback on the delivery of polls and any complaints received Performance against measures and objectives set out in your project plans Outcome: everybody who is eligible and wants to vote is able to do so and has confidence in the voting process What inputs are needed? RO understanding and delivery of role and responsibilities Management and oversight of the delivery of elections, including the range of statutory functions of the RO Planning Maintain plans for the delivery of elections, ensuring they are kept under review and actively used to support delivery Stakeholder engagement Establish and maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders Resources Identification and allocation of budget and temporary staffing; and management of contractors and suppliers Training Identification and delivery of training to meet the needs of both permanent and temporary staff What activities are being undertaken? Providing information to ensure voters understand how they can take part Develop and deliver a public awareness strategy, ensuring that electors are provided with the information they need to understand how they can take part Ensure all required election materials are accurate, accessible and made available as soon as practicable What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Analysis of different communication methods, to support targeting of messaging Evidence of working with partners to deliver public awareness Ballot paper rejection rates and postal vote rejection rates, contributing to an understanding of whether voters have been able to follow the instructions Feedback from polling station staff and data relating to those who were unable to vote due to not having appropriate identification (at relevant polls) (Wales only) Plans in place to ensure all information for electors is provided equally in English and Welsh, including all election materials Production of election materials Production and publication of election notices Production and delivery of poll cards Proof-checking of election materials Production of ballot papers What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Accuracy of statutory notices Information on method and timing of delivery of poll cards and postal ballot packs Accuracy and timeliness of election materials: Record of arrangements for any outsourcing of production and delivery of poll cards, postal votes and ballot papers Record of proof checking processes Examples of election materials Record of data protection processes Managing absent voting Production and delivery of postal ballot packs Opening and processing returned postal votes What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Accuracy and timeliness of postal ballot packs: Record of arrangements

for any outsourcing of production and delivery of postal ballot papers Audit trail of issuing of postal votes Record of checking processes Records of postal votes delivered by hand to council offices Accurate records of postal vote openings including audit trails of postal votes opened, verified and rejected Managing voting in person Identifying and booking suitable polling stations Assessing accessibility of polling stations Identifying and providing equipment to support voters with accessibility needs Ensuring polling stations are set up and staff are trained to support voters to vote independently and in secret Ensuring appropriate staffing levels at polling stations Providing training for polling station staff What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Evaluation checklists for polling stations to demonstrate suitability for use Polling station layout plans Approach taken to allocating electors and staff to polling stations Checklists of required polling station equipment Analysis of voter needs informing decisions about equipment to be provided to support voting Feedback from voters and local interest groups on equipment provided to support voting Guidance/training provided to polling station staff Records of those refused a ballot paper, by reason Records of postal votes delivered by hand to polling stations What difference is being made? Voters understand the different ways in which they can cast their vote Voters are able to cast their vote using their preferred method Voters are able to cast their vote in secret at polling stations Barriers to voting are minimised How can we determine the success of our work? Evaluation of public awareness activities Analysis of feedback and complaints from eligible voters, staff, candidates and agents Analysis of available data relating to voters who have not been able to cast their vote (for example, due to not having appropriate Identification (at relevant polls)) No voters are prevented from casting their vote due to inaccessibility of polling station arrangements Outcome: everybody who is eligible and wants to stand for election is able to do so and has confidence in the process What inputs are needed? RO understanding and delivery of role and responsibilities Management and oversight of the delivery of elections, including the range of statutory functions of the RO Planning Maintain plans for the delivery of elections, ensuring they are kept under review and actively used to support delivery Stakeholder engagement Establish and maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders Training Staff understand their responsibilities in relation to the processes to be followed for candidates seeking to stand for election What activities are being undertaken? Providing information to support anyone wishing to stand as a candidate in understanding what they need to do Ensuring accessibility and awareness of electoral processes Provision of information and guidance to parties, candidates and agents Briefings offered to candidates and agents Gathering feedback from attendees to inform continuous improvement What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Records of attendance at briefings Evaluation of feedback from candidates and agents on the information/briefings provided to those wanting to stand for election Analysis of process queries from candidates and agents to support provision of relevant information Number of nomination papers rejected by the RO, by reason Administration of the nominations process Provision of informal checks Determination of nomination papers Close of nomination processes Ensuring accurate ballot papers What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Records of arrangements in place for candidates to have their nominations informally checked Timeliness and accuracy of publication of the statement of persons nominated Accuracy of the ballot paper Assessment of GDPR requirements and records of management of personal data received as part of the nominations process Management of

access to electoral processes to ensure transparency and enable scrutiny Receipt of notifications of appointment of polling, postal voting and counting agents Provision of information relating to polling stations, postal vote opening sessions and the count (layout plan, process documents, etc.) What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Records of those entitled to access electoral processes Information provided to attendees What difference is being made? Candidates are aware of the process they need to follow to stand for election Nominations are accurately processed and everyone who is validly nominated is included on the ballot paper Candidates and appointed agents are aware of their entitlement to attend electoral processes and are able to carry out their scrutiny role effectively How can we determine the success of our work? No errors on the statement of persons nominated or ballot papers Analysis of feedback and complaints from candidates, agents or parties Outcome: everyone can have confidence that the election process is well managed and in the accuracy of the results What inputs are needed? RO understanding and delivery of role and responsibilities Management and oversight of the delivery of elections, including the range of statutory functions of the RO Planning Maintain plans for the delivery of elections, ensuring they are kept under review and actively used to support delivery Stakeholder engagement Establish and maintain strong relationships and manage communications with key stakeholders Resources Identification and allocation of budget and staffing Training Identification and delivery of training to meet the needs of both permanent and temporary staff What activities are being undertaken? Postal vote opening Accurate processing of returned postal votes Verification of postal vote identifiers What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Audit trail of receipt and opening of postal ballot packs Arrangements for the secure storage and transportation of returned postal votes Number of postal vote rejections, by reason Postal vote opening venue layout information Records of those entitled to attend Managing the verification and count Development of venue layout and processes to ensure an accessible and transparent count Managing attendance at the verification and count Managing the verification and count processes Managing media liaison What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Evaluation of previous count venues and processes Assessment of access needs, with actions taken to address any issues Count venue layout information Audit trail of receipt and opening of ballot boxes Audit trails of count processes Number of rejected ballots for each contest, by reason Strategy for dealing with both proactive and reactive communication with the media Managing the declaration of results Declarations are accurate and accessible Publication of results is timely and accurate What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Processes in place to quality assure results Accurate declarations of results (in Wales, in both and Welsh) Audit trails of verification and count paperwork Statement of results (in Wales, in both and Welsh) and where they are published Maintaining electoral integrity Ensuring the security of election materials Engagement with local SPOC Develop a fraud/integrity plan and work with the appropriate authorities to support the investigation of any allegations of electoral fraud/integrity issues What information is needed to understand the impact of our activities? Risk register showing security risks and associated mitigations Fraud/integrity plan, including risk assessments and mitigations Allegations of electoral fraud/integrity issues referred to the police What difference is being made? Voters have confidence their vote will be counted in the way they intended Candidates and agents have confidence in the accuracy of the result All those who have observed the election have confidence in the conduct of the election Voters can

easily access the results of the election Voters have confidence their vote is secure
How can we determine the success of our work? Elections delivered without legal
challenge to the administration of the poll Analysis of feedback and complaints from
candidates, agents and other observers Election results are accurate and readily
available Analysis of police data relating to allegations of electoral
fraud/integrity issues About the standards The standards are focussed on the outcomes
that should be delivered, rather than the processes that are followed, with the
objective of helping ROs and their teams to understand and demonstrate the impact of
their election activities. This should help ROs to make informed decisions on what
activities are undertaken, how these activities are carried out and how their limited
resources can be deployed efficiently and effectively. What do the standards comprise
of? An outcome: This states the broad goal that ROs should be seeking to achieve.
What inputs are needed? This sets out the resources that will need to be put into the
service to enable the necessary activities to be delivered. What activities are being
undertaken? This does not provide an exhaustive list of activities, but instead
summarises the headline activities that ROs are likely to need to undertake to be
able to meet the outcome. Our guidance and resources for ROs will support them in
determining the specific activities that will need to be carried out. What
information is needed to understand the impact of the activities? This highlights the
data and qualitative information which will help to demonstrate the impact of the
activities and which should form the basis of how ROs and the Commission can
determine the success of their work. Again this is not an exhaustive list and the
information listed may be supplemented by additional data or information that is
relevant to their performance. What difference is being made? This summarises the
combined effects that the activities should have and which, taken together, would
contribute to the delivery of the overall outcome. How can we determine the success
of the work? This sets out measures that will help to demonstrate what difference the
work is making. In some cases the difference will not be straightforward to quantify
or otherwise measure, and so an aggregation of several measures may be relied upon to
demonstrate what the work is achieving. Using the standards in 2023 Over the next
year we will use the performance standards to support ROs to focus, in particular, on
the effective and consistent implementation of the changes introduced under the
Elections Act.