

Annual Report and Accounts 2019/20 You are in the Our plans and priorities section Home Our plans and priorities In this section Performance analysis 2019/20: Goal one Performance analysis 2019/20: Goal two Performance analysis 2019/20: Goal three Performance analysis 2019/20: Goal four Looking ahead to 2020/21 and using our resources to support the delivery of our goals Overview This section provides an overview of the Electoral Commission, our purpose, our performance during the last year and the key risks to achieving our goals. We have included summary financial information within the performance report. This is consistent with the financial statements, where more detail is available. The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) established the Electoral Commission. We are independent of government and political parties and directly accountable to the UK Parliament through a committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons. We also report to the Scottish Parliament for functions related to its parliamentary and local government elections. Once the commencement provisions are enacted, we will also report to the Senedd for its parliamentary and local government elections. We have prepared our 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts in accordance with an accounts direction, set out on page 108 issued by HM Treasury under paragraph 17(2) of Schedule 1 PPERA. We have prepared the powers and sanctions report on page 38 in accordance with paragraph 15 Schedule 19(b) and paragraph 27 Schedule 19(c) PPERA.

Foreword Foreword For The Electoral Commission, 2019-20 has been a year characterised by a busy and shifting electoral timetable. In May, after supporting the delivery of local government elections in England and Northern Ireland, we responded quickly to the UK Government's decision to hold the European Parliamentary elections. In October, we mobilised to support an unscheduled UK Parliamentary general election on 12 December. In early 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, we advised on and supported the UK Government postponing the May polls, recognising the impacts on voters, campaigners, and local authorities. Ahead of the 2019 polls, we provided support to all those taking part. We ran public awareness campaigns to ensure that everyone who was eligible could register and cast their vote; one in four people saw our general election campaign and electoral administrators added more than 1.2 million people to the registers. During November and December, we fielded nearly 9,000 enquiries from the public, while almost 1.3 million users visited our website; giving people the information they needed to vote with confidence. We supported a record number of non-party campaigners to participate in the elections, and published information on over £113 million of donations accepted by political parties in the UK in 2019, ensuring the public could see where parties got their funding. We worked closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the College of Policing to produce guidance to help candidates run respectful campaigns and protect themselves from abuse. The electoral community rose to the challenge and, despite the uncertainty and tight timescales of the year's events, delivered well-run polls. Our public opinion research found that the majority of respondents had confidence in the way these polls ran (69% for the general election), though levels of confidence were lower than at previous such polls, and strains in the system are increasingly evident. As with all elections, we supported the work of electoral administrators - 99% of those who responded to our post-poll survey said they found our guidance and resources useful. In addition to the busy electoral timetable, we supported electoral administrators in two areas to hold recall petitions, each resulting in a subsequent by-election. We reported on the administration of these petitions and shared recommendations for future improvements

with the UK Government. We also supported preparations for important changes to the annual canvass in Great Britain, which will streamline the annual audit of electoral registers. We have developed guidance on the new process, so administrators understand their responsibilities, and created user-friendly forms for the public. We have worked closely with the Association of s, Scottish Assessors Association, Solace and officials from the UK's governments to ensure we all embed the changes successfully. We maintained the registers of political parties and campaigners, and oversaw the laws on political finance, publishing financial returns, administering policy development grants, providing guidance and advice, and taking regulatory actions. We have a strong track- record of success in the courts, but look to learn too from all outcomes. We also enabled or supported related bodies in their regulatory work, such as the police, CPS, Information Commissioner, Ofcom, Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. We also engaged with the main social media companies to encourage their role in transparency in political campaigning. We have continued to strengthen our relationships with, and fulfil our accountabilities to, the Scottish, Welsh and UK parliaments. This has included evaluating the voter ID pilots conducted in England; helping prepare for franchise changes in Wales and Scotland; and supporting significant electoral reform bills in the Scottish and Welsh parliaments. We worked with the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland on plans to deliver the full-scale canvass it is required to run every 10 years, which will now take place in 2021. We are seeing alignment between our recommendations and the initiatives and priorities of the UK's governments, such as the UK Government's commitments on defending democracy and the Scottish Parliament inclusion of many of our recommendations in its new referendums legislation. We will continue to encourage all governments to implement our recommendations, including reforms of the rules for digital campaigning and on electoral law more broadly, founded on the excellent recommendations made by the Law Commissions' final report on the subject. In 2019, we published major research into the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers, as well as feasibility studies on options for modernising electoral registration, demonstrating the potential benefits of future reform in this area. We are also committed to making reforms of our own. In the last year, we continued reviewing all party descriptions included on the register, to help voters clearly identify candidates on the ballot paper. Working with the main political parties, we have made good progress on a new online tool that will make it easier for parties and campaigners to register with us and report financial information. In a system where most comply with the political finance rules, our preference is to help increase compliance rather than to take enforcement action afterwards. This new tool will play a role in helping those we regulate to achieve that. To underpin our work, we have improved our human resources, planning and digital technology functions. We have implemented new online planning, governance and procurement systems. We have also invested in staff engagement and development, resulting in staff turnover falling by 19 percentage points. As we look ahead to the coming year, a key concern remains the risks presented by archaic and complex electoral law. Combined with continued pressure on local authority resources and capacity, and an outdated registration system, it is increasing the strain on electoral administrators and failing to keep pace with technological advances. We stand ready to work with governments and other stakeholders to address these challenges. We look forward to continuing to work with the UK's governments to ensure their existing reform plans can be taken forward effectively. We are working closely with all governments on the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic for elections and

electoral processes, and talking to others, to see what lessons we can learn and what further changes might usefully be introduced for the future. Our role The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees election and regulates political finance in the United Kingdom. Our vision and goals Our vision is to be a world-class public sector organisation - innovative, delivering great value and getting right what matters most to voters and legislators. In 2019/20 we worked towards achieving four goals: To enable the continued delivery of free and fair elections and referendums, focusing on the need of electors and addressing the changing environment to ensure every vote remains secure and accessible. To ensure increasingly trusted and transparent systems of regulation in political finance, overseeing compliance, promoting understanding amongst those regulated and proactively pursuing breaches. To be an independent and respected centre of expertise, using knowledge and insight to further the transparency, fairness and efficiency of our democratic system, and help adapt it to the modern, digital age. To provide value for money, making best use of our resources and expertise to deliver services that are attuned to what matters most to voters. This goal underpins and supports all of our work. Our 2019-20 year at a glance

Month	Activity
April 2019	Appointed a new Chief Executive Completed a campaign encouraging people to register to vote ahead of local elections in England and Northern Ireland
May	Supported the delivery of local elections in England and Northern Ireland Ran a campaign encouraging people to register to vote before the European Parliamentary elections, and supported the delivery of the polls Provided written and oral evidence to the National Assembly for Wales on the Senedd and Elections (Wales) Bill; and gave oral evidence to the London Assembly on the Metropolitan Police's investigation into Vote Leave Supported the delivery of the recall petition in Brecon and Radnorshire
June	Published a report on the UK Government's proposals to amend the annual canvass Provided oral evidence to the UK Parliament on disinformation
July	Published our evaluation of the UK Government's 2019 voter ID pilots Launched our new website at electoralcommission.org.uk Published feasibility studies on modernising electoral registration Provided oral evidence to the UK Parliament on electoral law and on the rules for any future citizens' assembly or referendum
August	Provided written evidence to the Scottish Parliament on its Referendums Bill
September	Published new guidance for non-party campaigners Published findings from our research into the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers in Great Britain and Northern Ireland Provided written evidence to the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill, and on its Referendums Bill Published a report on the ordering of candidates on ballot papers at Scottish council elections
October	Published reports on the May 2019 elections and on the recall petitions from Peterborough, and Brecon and Radnorshire constituencies Provided oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish Elections (Franchise and Representation) Bill Consulted on codes of practice on spending by candidates and political parties at Senedd elections
November	Provided written and oral evidence to the Scottish Parliament on the Scottish Elections (Reform) Bill Ran a voter registration campaign before the UK Parliamentary general election
December	Supported the delivery of the UK Parliamentary general election
January 2020	Provided written and oral evidence to the National Assembly for Wales on the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Bill Launched a consultation on Electoral Registration Officer performance standards
February	Provided written evidence to the National Assembly for Wales on electoral systems and boundaries Provided written evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013
March	Provided written evidence to the House of Lords Select Committee on Democracy and Digital

Technologies Published electoral fraud data from 2019 Our year in numbers Used £20.2m of resources, including £879k capital spend Invested 47% of our expenditure on staff costs (£9.4m) Achieved 72% employee engagement score (65% in 2018) Answered 25,402 public enquiries – a 408% increase on last year Contributed to more than 1.9m additions to the electoral register following three campaigns Responded to 287 Freedom of Information requests Published 1,743 routine financial returns from parties and campaigners Notified 86% of the 159 party registration applications of their outcome within 30 days Published 769 annual statement of accounts for political parties and accounting units Registered 36 non-party campaigners in the month before the UK Completed 83 investigations, 84% of them within 180 days Imposed £90,580 of civil sanctions in our role as a regulator Published 100% of our guidance products on time Responded to 5,548 requests for advice from local authorities – 99.7% within 3 days Accredited 1,167 electoral observers – the highest number since we started the scheme in 2007 Performance analysis We measure our performance against the goals set out in our 2019-20 Business Plan. We have identified activities and corresponding performance measures that contribute towards delivering each goal. The Commission Board agrees our performance measures each year and receives a progress update every quarter. Jump to: [Goal one](#) [Goal two](#) [Goal three](#) [Goal four](#) Looking ahead to 2020/21 and using our resources to support the delivery of our goals [Download our full annual report and accounts](#) [Annual report and accounts 2019/20](#) [Related content](#) [Our spending about our spending estimates, reports and accounts](#) [Our plans and priorities](#) Find out about what's important to us, and what we plan to achieve in the future [How we make decisions](#) Find out about our Board, committees and groups