Polling station scenarios

Scottish Parliamentary election

Aim	The approach	Comments
This exercise is designed to demonstrate how to deal with voters on polling day	Model the most effective method of dealing with the voter, including the range of circumstances that polling station staff may face on polling day.	There may be various models depending on the space available and the layout of the polling station.
The plan		
Setting up the polling station and briefing the players. For this exercise it is assumed that one Presiding Officer (PO) and two poll clerks (PCs) are appointed.	Ensure there is suitable and accessible space such that all delegates can see and hear. Identify and brief staff playing the roles of poll clerks, giving them prepared scenarios for each module.	Role play works most effectively with small groups (maximum 20 people). If there is not sufficient room for them to gather around the set-up, walk through the exercise in slow time.
Precise requirements		
Make it real	Ballot booths	
	Notices	
	Signs	
	Mock ballot papers	
	Example register	
	CNLs	
	Sundries Box	
	Ballot boxes with seals	
	Poll cards (as per scenarios below)	
	Flip chart, pad and pens	
	Ballot paper account	

	Roving microphone (dependent on set up)	
Role play		
Module 1 – Setting up the polling station	Model setting up the booths, tables and the location of the ballot boxes to suit different types of spaces. Remind the delegates about the importance of accessibility. Reinforce the message about security and integrity of the voting process. Explain the need for clear signage and instructions and where statutory forms must be placed.	Interact with the delegates to obtain their views on the best model. Model the flow of the process to agree the most suitable path. The security of the ballot boxes and the secrecy of the vote is key.
Module 2 – The voting process	In slow time – trainers walk through the normal voting process with two volunteer PCs. Who does what? Demonstrate the flow (i.e. what the 1st PC does and how the role links to 2nd PC) and issue ballot papers to a voter (the trainer).	It is important to get this right – refer to polling station handbook and quick guide.
Module 3 - The scenarios	Work through the various scenarios.	Players should be rehearsed with their scenarios.
	1. Elector not on the register	Scenario 1
	2. Postal voter: lost or did not receive postal votes	Scenario 2
	3. Postal voter: spoilt postal ballot papers	Scenario 3
	4. Postal voter: did not apply to vote by post	Scenario 4
	5. Proxy voter: voting for proxy and as self	Scenario 5
	6. Elector marked as having already voted	Scenario 6

	7. Voter handing in completed postal votes	Scenario 7
	8. Voter not entitled to vote at Scottish Parliamentary election	Scenario 8
Module 4 - Nearing close of poll	Explain how to deal with a queue of voters as only those in the queue at the correct polling station at 10pm can vote or hand in a completed postal vote.	
Module 5 – Completing the ballot paper account	Using model ballot paper account, go through step-by-step process of completion after close of poll.	Ballot paper account exercise

Scenarios

Scenario 1 – Voter not on the register

The PC will:

1. check the register but find no entry against the address
2. as well as the register, check the 'other electors' and clerical error sections
3. ask the person if they completed a voter registration form on paper or online
4. if they did, suggest to the person that they contact the electoral registration office for them to check their files
5. if not, say that unfortunately you have to be registered in order to vote and that it is not linked to other records such as council tax. If that does not satisfy them, ask them to contact the electoral registration office

Get the 'voter' to produce a 'prop' passport or driving licence and be quite assertive at wanting to vote. The PC, supported by the PO should politely but firmly say that they cannot issue a ballot paper and that they must contact the electoral registration office. Go back

Scenario 2 – Postal voter has lost or did not receive their postal votes

The PC will suggest that the voter goes to the elections office to obtain replacement postal votes at any time until 10pm and gives the voter details of the address. If it is before 10pm but the elector cannot or does not want to make arrangements for a replacement to be issued, the PO should follow the procedure for issuing tendered ballot papers instead. Go back

Scenario 3 – Elector has spoilt their postal ballot papers (before 5pm)

The PC will suggest that the voter goes to the elections office to obtain replacement postal votes at any time before 5pm on polling day and gives the voter details of the address. Go back

Scenario 4 – Postal voter did not request a postal vote and wants to vote in person

The PC will explain that if the person received their postal ballot pack, they can return it to the polling station. Also explain that they cannot issue ordinary ballot papers and the PO can only issue tendered ballot papers after the elector has answered the prescribed questions satisfactorily. **Tendered ballot papers must not be put in the ballot boxes.** However, the elector should be advised that, up until 10pm, the Constituency Returning Officer may issue a replacement postal ballot pack. The elector details should be included in the PO's log book. Go back

Scenario 5 – A voter states they have been appointed as proxy for another voter and also wishes to cast their own votes

One PC will advise that they should vote for themselves first and should then return to their desk to apply to vote for their proxy (don't make them queue up again if there is a queue). The other PC will ask for both the elector's and proxy's name and address. The PC checks the register to see if the elector has already voted and checks that the elector they are voting on behalf of is eligible to vote. If satisfied that ballot papers can be issued, the PC will draw a line against the entry on the list of proxies and mark the elector's entry as usual. Go back

Scenario 6 – Voter marked as having already voted

The PC will explain that they have already been marked as having voted, and will direct the voter to the PO. The PO will explain that they can issue tendered ballot papers, provided that the prescribed questions are answered satisfactorily. The PO will ask the prescribed questions. The elector's details are entered on the list of tendered votes. Ask voter to mark the ballot papers in secret, fold and return them. **Tendered ballot papers must not be put in the ballot boxes.** Cover the ballot box slot. The PO will endorse the tendered ballot papers with the name of the voter and their elector number. Go back

Scenario 7 – A voter hands in completed postal votes

The PC will check that they are for the correct constituency and, if so, accept them and pass them to the PO for insertion into the appropriate packet. Go back

Scenario 8 – overseas elector who is only entitled to vote in UK Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections

A person registered as an overseas elector applies for ballot papers to vote at the Scottish Parliamentary election. The PC will check the register and identify the marker against their name ('F' marker). The PC will explain that they are only entitled to vote in UK Parliamentary and European Parliamentary elections and cannot vote at the Scottish Parliamentary election. If they are now back living in the UK they need to register again as an ordinary elector to be able to vote at all future elections. Go back