

Northern Ireland annual report You are in the Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 section Home Our plans and priorities Annual Report and Accounts 2022/23 First published: 4 July 2023 Last updated: 27 September 2023 Title Summary Our work in Northern Ireland over the last year has largely been dominated by electoral events, from supporting the May 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly election at the start of the year, through to preparations for the May 2023 local council elections over the later part of the year. This work has been delivered against a backdrop of political uncertainty, with the Assembly unable to elect a First Minister and Deputy First Minister following the May 2022 election. As a responsible regulator, we have maintained up to date contingency plans for an unscheduled election, and throughout this period we have continued to work closely with the Chief Electoral Officer, political parties and the electoral community across Northern Ireland to provide advice and support on issues relating to electoral law, financial reporting, campaigning and voter registration. Work done to achieve our aims We supported the successful delivery of the May 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly election. Following the Northern Ireland Assembly election, we published a report reflecting data and evidence gathered on voting, campaigning and delivering the election. This included recommendations for improving the system further. We ran a mass-media voter registration campaign ahead of the Assembly election, supported by press and partnership activity. We developed new resources for democratic engagement with schools and other learning providers. Welcome to Your Vote Week took place at the end of January, with a involvement from 20 schools across Northern Ireland. We published campaign spending from the Northern Ireland Assembly election. The Commission's Board travelled to Belfast to meet with the Chief Electoral Officer, academics, youth groups and political parties. Our May 2022 election report found that 71% of candidates in Northern Ireland had experienced some kind of abuse or intimidation. As a result, the Board met with female representatives of all the major parties in Northern Ireland to hear their experiences of abuse while campaigning and to consider ways to increase the safety of candidates at future polls. Ahead of the May 2023 local council elections, in partnership with the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI), Public Prosecution Service and the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI), we published joint guidance for candidates to help them recognise and respond to intimidatory and criminal behaviour. We launched our voter registration campaign for the May 2023 Northern Ireland local council elections. In partnership with EONI, Royal Mail and the PSNI we hosted pre-election seminars in Belfast, Omagh and online for candidates and agents taking part in the May 2023 local elections. We also offered one-to-one surgeries to support those participating in the election. Despite the absence of a functioning Assembly, the Northern Ireland Political Parties Panel continued to meet during the year. The panel provides an important link for sharing information between the Commission, the Chief Electoral Officer and political parties. Looking ahead Our report on the May 2023 Northern Ireland local council elections will be published in autumn 2023. We will continue to support parties and campaigners to comply with the law, while ensuring that political finance is transparent. We will also continue to provide support and guidance to EONI. In March 2023 the Chief Electoral Officer stood down and an interim appointment was made to ensure the delivery of the local council elections. When a new Chief Electoral Officer is appointed, we will work closely with them to support the delivery of well-run elections and electoral registration in Northern Ireland. We will publish our latest assessment of the accuracy and completeness of the electoral register in

Northern Ireland in autumn 2023. We will continue to provide expert advice and recommendations for improving the current system, including making the case for reform of the canvass and wider electoral registration process in Northern Ireland. We will build on the work we have already done to provide educational resources, and will seek to establish new partners to promote and improve political literacy across demographics less likely to be engaged in the democratic process. The implementation of the Elections Act will continue to impact on our work in Northern Ireland. Working closely with the Northern Ireland Office, the Chief Electoral Officer, and other stakeholders, we will support the implementation of the changes made to the electoral process in Northern Ireland through the Act. This will include responding to relevant consultations on secondary legislation, updating and producing new guidance, and promoting awareness of these changes to the electoral community in Northern Ireland. We will maintain up to date planning for a Northern Ireland Assembly election, which is due to be held before April 2024 if an executive is not formed by January 2024.

Commitment to EDI The Electoral Commission serves a diverse democracy in Northern Ireland. We published our new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Single Equality Scheme for Northern Ireland in autumn 2022. Under new legislation, Ulster-Scots and Irish language commissioners are expected to be appointed and will be tasked with developing best practice standards and promoting the services provided by public authorities. The Commission will monitor this in relation to its own work and services.

[Navigation](#) [Previous](#) [Next](#) [Powers and sanctions report](#) [Wales annual report](#)