

Guidance for (Acting) Returning Officers administering a UK Parliamentary election in Great Britain

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The following guidance has been produced to support (Acting) Returning Officers ((A)ROs) in Great Britain in planning for and delivering a UK Parliamentary election. It has been written to cover both general and by-elections. It has been developed in close consultation with colleagues across the electoral community including the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE), the Association of s (AEA), the UK Electoral Coordination and Advisory Board (ECAB), the Elections, Registration and Referendums Working Group (ERRWG), the Electoral Management Board of Scotland (EMB), and the Welsh Electoral Practitioners Working Group (WEPWG). It reflects the (A)RO's legal obligations and what we, and colleagues across the electoral community, believe that (A)ROs should expect of their staff in preparing for and delivering UK Parliamentary elections. At a UK Parliamentary election in England and Wales the administration of the election is the responsibility of the (A)RO, who is normally a senior officer of the local authority.

1 In Scotland, there is no office of (A)RO. Instead, the election is administered by the RO, who is the local government RO or, in the case of a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, the local government RO listed in an Order made by the Secretary of State.

2 Throughout our guidance for elections across Great Britain we use the term (Acting) Returning Officer or (A)RO to refer to the duties normally undertaken by the Acting Returning Officer in England and Wales, and by the Returning Officer in Scotland.

How to use the guidance

The guidance is directed towards the (A)RO and the duties they carry out. As these duties may, in practice, be carried out by deputies and/or appointed staff, we use the term 'you' throughout this guidance to mean the (A)RO and whoever is carrying out the (A)RO's functions on their behalf. Throughout this guidance we use 'must' to refer to a specific legal requirement and 'may / should' for recommended practice. Where the guidance is different for by-elections or where the (A)RO needs to consider cross-boundary scenarios, the information will be contained in an expanding section. This means that next to the relevant heading there is an icon with a + which will expand to show the relevant guidance. Guidance to support ROs with other types of election is also available. You can also access Guidance for Candidates and Agents . To help you use this guidance we have produced a Q&A document that should answer any initial queries you may have.

Questions and answers document for the new style RO guidance

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2. S. 25 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

Returning Officer and (Acting) Returning Officer

This section of the guidance covers the appointment of the Returning Officer and (Acting) Returning officer as well as the roles and responsibilities for those appointed to this post. It also contains guidance on the consequences of the breach of official duty and the legislative powers available to the (A)RO to use in certain circumstances. Additionally, this section also contains guidance on the skills and knowledge that is expected to be required of an (A)RO. Finally, it provides a detailed list of the relevant legislation that the guidance has been written to reflect, and which an (A)RO should be familiar with.

Last updated: 30 May 2023

Book traversal links for Returning Officer and (Acting) Returning Officer

Guidance for (Acting) Returning Officers administering a UK Parliamentary election in Great Britain

Returning Officer and (Acting) Returning Officer appointment

Returning Officer and (Acting) Returning Officer appointment

England and Wales

At a UK

Parliamentary election in England and Wales, the Returning Officer (RO) is a largely ceremonial position. Most duties of the RO are discharged by the (Acting) Returning Officer ((A)RO) who is normally a senior officer of the local authority. Appointment of the RO In a borough constituency contained in a district, the mayor or chairman of the local authority is the RO. In a county constituency, the RO is the Sheriff of the County. In areas where the constituency overlaps county or district borders, the RO is designated by the Secretary of State. See below for an explanation of the two types of constituencies.

- 1 Duties of the RO It is for the RO to receive the writ directing that a UK Parliamentary election is to be held. However, an RO can appoint a deputy for the purposes of receiving the writ.
- 2 The RO may also reserve for themselves the duties in connection with endorsing and returning the writ, as well as declaring and giving public notice of the result. In that case, they must give written notice to you, as the (A)RO. The notice must be given in writing by the day after the receipt of the writ and needs to specify which duties the RO wishes to reserve for themselves.
- 3 The notice is not prescribed. You should contact the RO at an early stage in your planning to ensure they are aware of their duties in connection with the role and to discuss whether or not these duties will be delegated.

Appointment of (Acting) Returning Officer In a constituency for which the chairman of a district council or the mayor of a London borough is the RO, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) appointed by that council is the (A)RO. In the case of any other constituency in England and Wales, the ERO for one of the local authorities covered by the constituency will be designated as (A)RO by an order made by the Secretary of State.

- 4 Scotland In Scotland, there is no RO with a ceremonial role. The RO is the person responsible for administering the election. The RO for a UK Parliamentary election in Scotland is the same person who has been appointed RO for the election of councillors in the local authority in which the constituency is situated. Where a constituency crosses local authority boundaries, the Secretary of State will direct which local authority RO is the RO for the UK Parliamentary election.
- 5 We use the term (Acting) Returning Officer or (A)RO in relation to the duties undertaken by the Acting Returning Officer in England and Wales and the Returning Officer in Scotland. Any references to deputy throughout this guidance should be read as depute for elections in Scotland.

Boundaries and constituencies There are two types of constituency: county and borough (or burgh in Scotland). In this guidance the term borough will be used and should be read as burgh for constituencies in Scotland. Typically, borough constituencies are mainly urban while county constituencies are mainly rural. Legislation for England, 6 Wales 7 and Scotland 8 sets out whether a constituency is a county or borough constituency. UK Parliamentary elections are run on UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries. Constituencies can be coterminous with the areas of local authorities but many comprise only part of the area, while others cross one or more local authority boundaries. While you are responsible for delivering the election for your constituency as a whole, in practice, if any part of the constituency falls outside your local authority, you will need to consider what impact this will have on your processes and whether you will need to delegate some of your functions to a senior officer at the other local authority. You should liaise closely with the ERO and election staff at the relevant local authority/authorities in order to identify any possible issues and how these will be addressed. You should seek their advice and assistance, where necessary, as they will be more familiar with those areas.

Insurance As you are personally liable for the conduct of the election you should ensure that you have insurance cover and that it is up-to-date. You should be

prepared to demonstrate robust planning and decision-making processes in the event of any challenge to the election and a claim against the insurance policy. The team at your council dealing with insurance may be able to help determine what existing cover is in place and available, and to provide advice as to whether it should be extended.

1. Section 24 and Schedule 1, Rule 3 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983)

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footnote 2 3. S. 28(3) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. S. 28 RPA 1983 ■

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Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 2007/1681 art.2(1)(b) and the schedule ■

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Regions (Wales) Order 2006/1041 art.2(c) and sch.1 ■ Back to content at footnote 7 8.

Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) Order 2005/250 art.2(c) and the schedule ■

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(Acting) Returning Officer (Acting) Returning Officer - role and responsibilities

(Acting) Returning Officer - role and responsibilities As (A)RO, you play a central

role in the democratic process. Your role is to ensure that the election is

administered effectively and that, as a result, the experience of voters and those

standing for election is a positive one. You should set out at an early stage what

you want to achieve and what success would look like for you. You must also consider

accessibility for voters at polling stations. Our guidance on assistance with voting

for disabled people provides further information. As (A)RO you are personally

responsible for the conduct of the UK Parliamentary election, including: receiving

the writ (where the RO has not reserved this duty) publishing the notice of election

administering the nomination process printing the ballot papers publishing the notice

of poll, statement of persons nominated and notice of situation of polling stations

the provision of polling stations appointing Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks

managing the postal voting process verifying and counting the votes declaring the

result (where the RO has not reserved this duty) Your duties as (A)RO are separate

from your duties as a local government officer. As (A)RO you are not responsible to

the local authority but are directly accountable to the courts as an independent

statutory office holder. While you can appoint one or more persons to discharge any

or all of your functions as (A)RO, you cannot delegate your personal responsibility

for delivering the election. 1 You can find further information in our guidance on

the appointment of deputies . Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary

constituencies Where the constituency crosses local authority boundaries, to deliver

your functions effectively, there will need to be a close working relationship

between you and the respective ROs and their staff. While the responsibility for the

provision of polling stations and polling station staff for the polls rests with you,

as (A)RO, you should seek advice and assistance, as necessary, from the local

government RO and their staff for the other local authority area who will be more

familiar with that particular area. 1. Sections 35(4), 63(1) and (3)(b)

Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated:

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responsibilities Returning Officer and (Acting) Returning Officer appointment Breach

of official duty and power to correct procedural errors Breach of official duty and

power to correct procedural errors As (A)RO you are subject to breach of official

duty provisions. This means that if you or your appointed deputies are, without

reasonable cause, guilty of any act or omission in breach of official duty you

(and/or they) are liable on summary conviction to an unlimited fine in England and

Wales or, in Scotland, a fine not exceeding £5,000. 1 You have the power to take such steps as you think appropriate to remedy acts or omissions that arise in connection with any function of the elections and that are not in accordance with the rules. 2 This power allows you to correct procedural errors that are made by you, as (A)RO, an ERO, a Presiding Officer (or any deputies of any of these), or a person providing goods or services to you/them. 3 A procedural error refers to an error someone has made during the process of planning or delivering the election, which may affect the election process or result. For example, incorrect information being produced on poll cards or ballot papers, or postal or polling station ballot papers being issued in error or not issued when they should have been. The above examples are not exhaustive and you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice if you have think you may have made a mistake that could be corrected using this power. Where you remedy an act or omission in full by using your power to correct a procedural error, you will not be guilty of an offence of breach of official duty. 4 You should remember that the power to correct procedural errors does not enable you to recount the votes once the result has been declared. 5

1. Section 63 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. Section 63(4) RPA 1983 and Section 46 Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA 2006) ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. S.46 EAA 2006 ■ Back to content at footnote 3

4. S. 63(4) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4

5. S. 46 EAA 2006 ■ Back to content at footnote 5

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[\(Acting\) Returning Officer - skills and knowledge](#)

[\(Acting\) Returning Officer - skills and knowledge](#)

You should have a working knowledge of the relevant legislation governing the conduct of the election. This means that, in addition to having a clear understanding of your statutory functions, you should have an overview of what the legislation contains and an understanding of how it affects the administration of the election, so that you can review, question where necessary, and quality-assure the whole process. There are management responsibilities attached to your role. For example: commanding the required staff and resources to deliver a well-run election drawing in the necessary support, skills and expertise from across your own local authority overseeing the planning, project management and risk management of the election and incorporating any lessons learnt from previous polls identifying and overseeing any actions necessary to mitigate any issues arising ensuring that staff are appropriately trained to deliver the roles required of them supporting the staff administering the election and providing appropriate oversight of their work providing direction to staff, monitoring progress and receiving regular feedback on activities in the case of cross-boundary constituencies, seeking advice and assistance from the RO and staff at the other local authorities if you are not also the ERO, maintaining an effective working relationship with them maintaining an effective working relationship with your police Single Point of Contact (SPOC) ensuring that election accounts are completed in a timely manner

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[Book traversal links for \(Acting\) Returning Officer - skills and knowledge](#)

[Breach of official duty and power to correct procedural errors](#)

[Relevant legislation](#)

[Relevant legislation](#)

[Relevant legislation](#)

This guidance is based on, and should be read in accordance with, the requirements set out in the following legislation (as amended): Representation of the People Acts 1983, 1985 and 2000 Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 Parliamentary Constituencies (Scotland) Order 2005 Electoral Administration Act 2006

Parliamentary Constituencies and Assembly Electoral Regions (Wales) Order 2006
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 2007 Political Parties and Elections Act
2009 Fixed Term Parliament Act 2011 Electoral Registration and Administration Act
2013 Elections Act 2022 The Voter Identification Regulations 2022 The ■Assistance
with Voting for Persons with Disabilities (Amendments) Regulations 2022 The list
above includes only the legislation that makes provision in areas that this guidance
relates to and that is currently in force. Data protection legislation applies to the
processing of all personal data. (A)ROs are personally responsible for ensuring that
they comply with the requirements of data protection legislation. We have published
guidance to support you in meeting your obligations under data protection legislation
as it relates to your electoral administration responsibilities. You are also
required to have regard to the public sector equality duty contained in Section 149
of the Equality Act 2010 when carrying out your duties. (A)ROs in Wales should also
have regard to the Welsh Language Act 1993 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure
2011, which require services in Wales to be delivered in the Welsh language. Last
updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Relevant legislation (Acting) Returning
Officer - skills and knowledge Planning for the election Planning for the election
Planning for the election A UK Parliamentary election is a significant event which
brings with it its own particular challenges. Having robust plans in place are
crucial to ensure you are able to deliver a well-run election. This section of the
guidance covers the planning you will need to do to support the delivery of the
election, including what your project plan should contain and how you should go about
implementing it. It also contains guidance on staffing and staff training required,
the specific venues needed for key processes, and support on the use of suppliers and
contractors. Additionally, this section also contains guidance on identifying,
monitoring and mitigating risk, and developing plans with the police to ensure the
integrity of the election is maintained. Finally, it provides guidance on how you
will need to plan for your public awareness activity to promote both voter
registration and provide information to support electors voting, and engagement with
candidates and agents. Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Planning
for the election Relevant legislation Planning for a UK Parliamentary election
Planning for a UK Parliamentary election Planning for a UK Parliamentary election A
UK Parliamentary election is a significant event which brings with it its own
particular challenges. Your work to deliver a well-run poll will come under
considerable scrutiny – from voters, candidates and political parties, and the media
including through social media. This section seeks to highlight some of the
particular aspects of context relevant to UK Parliamentary elections which you should
ensure underpin all aspects of your planning. Nature of a UK Parliamentary election
The election will likely be hard-fought, with many close contests in constituencies
across Great Britain. The evolving political landscape could mean that even in places
where there have traditionally been large majorities this may no longer be the case.
The focus and circumstances could be different from anything experienced in your area
before. There may be a significant number of new or less experienced political
parties, candidates and agents who are unfamiliar with the practices and processes of
an election and who will need your support to be able to participate effectively.
Particularly given the possibility of close and hard-fought contests, you should be
prepared for the integrity of this election to be scrutinised. Allegations and cases
of electoral fraud will not only have a negative impact on the confidence of electors
and campaigners, but they may also have a significant impact on your capacity to
manage the election process effectively. It is therefore crucial that you put in

place detailed and robust plans for monitoring and maintaining the integrity of the election in your area. You should work closely with the local police, ensuring you have in place good lines of communication for referring any allegations. For more information see our guidance on [Maintaining the integrity of the election](#) .

Scale and turnout The level of preparatory work you will be able to undertake ahead of an election will vary depending on various factors, including whether it is a scheduled election or a by-election, the number of constituencies you are responsible for, and the level of combination of polls, if any. Many aspects of planning for the election will need to reflect assumptions as to the likely turnout for the poll. Establishing such assumptions at an early stage in the planning is of key importance as the scope for adjusting plans is limited at a later stage in the process. The level of interest in a UK Parliamentary election is likely to be significant. You should plan for the possibility of a high turnout and, as a minimum, you should assume that the turnout will be not less than the turnout at the last equivalent polls. As the poll becomes closer, the context will continue to evolve as the campaigns pick up pace. You will need to be prepared to react to events both within your constituency and more broadly which could have an impact on the effective delivery of the poll. This will include having robust contingency plans in place that you can turn to where required. If, for example, there are televised Leaders' debates, these could conceivably result in a late surge of registration and absent voting applications, as well as having an impact on turnout and are likely to alter the traditional pattern of when completed postal votes are returned. It is vital that appropriate provision of polling stations is made, with the numbers of stations and the numbers of staff within them sufficient to deal with the number of electors allocated to them. Although the legislation allows any voters in a queue at their polling station at 10pm to vote, ¹ the need to ensure that voters do not face undue delays in voting and can receive a high-quality service remains. There is likely to be a media focus on the count and declaration of results and it will be important to manage expectations, not only of the media but of all with an interest in the results, by consulting on your proposed approach and subsequently communicating clearly what you expect to deliver and by when.

1. Rule 37(7) Schedule 1, Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)

Last updated: 30 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Planning for a UK Parliamentary election](#) [Planning for the election](#) [Learning from previous polls](#) [Learning from previous polls](#) [Learning from previous polls](#) [Before you start planning for the election](#), you should ensure that you have carried out a review of the last equivalent polls. You should have carried out a thorough evaluation of all processes outlined in your project plan for the previous election, sought feedback from appropriate stakeholders, and produced a lessons learnt document to inform the project plan and risk register for future electoral events. You can find further information in our guidance on [Reviewing the election](#) . The Commission has provided, as part of the template project plan, some sample objectives and suggested tools that will allow you to measure the extent to which the conduct of the election has been successful. The Commission has also provided an evaluation plan as part of the template project plan to assist you with the review process. [Project plan UKPGE EA \(docx\)](#) Last updated: 30 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Learning from previous polls](#) [Planning for a UK Parliamentary election](#) [Developing plans for the election](#) [Developing plans for the election](#) [Project plan](#) You should prepare a project plan for the management of the election, treat it as a living document, keep it under regular review, and use it to monitor progress throughout. You should record all steps taken to prepare your plan in order to be able to provide an audit trail

demonstrating your decision making process. You should be able to explain your decisions, and you should be prepared to do so in response to enquiries. Your planning should ensure that: voters are able to vote easily and know that their vote will be counted in the way they intended it is easy for people who want to stand for election to find out how to get involved, what the rules are, and what they have to do to comply with these rules everyone can have confidence in the management of the process and the result. We have produced a template project plan that you may wish to use and adapt to fit your local circumstances. The template includes a number of example deliverables and tasks and you should also add in any others you identify as necessary, including ones specific to your local circumstances. Project plan UKPGE EA (docx) Before starting your detailed planning, you should set out what you want to achieve and what success would look like. Your project plan should include clearly defined objectives and success measures to help you to measure the extent to which the conduct of the election has been successful as part of the template project plan. You should ensure that your planning reflects the particular context and the nature of the election, including any changes to either legislation or the political landscape since the last general election. Your project plan should also identify the resources required. Once the fees and charges for the election have been set, you should reconcile projected costs for activities against the available budget. You should take all necessary steps to ensure that the local authority makes the necessary resources available to you to enable you to discharge your functions. You also need to plan for the implementation of accessibility requirements in the polling stations. Your plans should include: where accessibility needs to be considered which barriers prevent equal access to voting for all persons when you need to action any identified requirements; for example if you need to buy additional equipment - will it be received in time? written notes of all considerations and actions taken in respect of any requested reasonable adjustments You should also establish working relationships with experts at the local authority who should be able to offer support and advice on any reasonable adjustments needed. A reasonable adjustment is a change that is made to reduce or remove a disadvantage in relation to someone's disability compared to non-disabled people. For example the removal of physical barriers or providing extra support for disabled persons. You will need to review your plans to ensure they outline your processes and the data protection safeguards that you have in place, as they will provide a sound basis for you to meet your data protection obligations. Your council's data protection officer will be able to help you meet your requirements and ascertain best practice. In particular, you will need to ensure that you are registered with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) as a data controller. Further detailed guidance on data protection legislation, including registering as a data controller , is contained in our data protection guidance . Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, this will have practical implications for the management of key processes and you should reflect this in your planning. For example, you will be responsible for verifying signatures and dates of birth on postal voting statements returned by electors from one or more other local authority areas as well as from your own local authority area. You will also be responsible for the provision and equipment of polling stations for the entire constituency and will need to decide how to manage this, including how you will ensure you have up-to-date information about the polling places that have been designated for use in other local authority areas. You should liaise with the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) and other relevant elections

staff from the other local authority area(s) in your planning for the delivery of the poll. **Risk register** Risk register You should also prepare a risk register which should also be a living document and kept under regular review. You should use your risk register to monitor the known risks and document any changes in risk, as well as ensuring that mitigating actions are identified and are being taken forward as appropriate. Your risk register should identify: any difficulties and problems that may occur, and the actions taken to mitigate them the seriousness of any risk by indicating both the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact of the risk if it did occur We have developed a template risk register that you may wish to use. The template provides some example risks and suggestions for mitigating those risks. In addition to the risks identified in the template you should also identify any other risks, including ones specific to your local circumstances, and how you would mitigate those. **Risk register** Last updated: 27 September 2023 **Book traversal links for Developing plans for the election** **Learning from previous polls** **The election timetable** The election timetable The election timetable We have published a non-date specific timetable for UK Parliamentary general elections and by-elections containing the statutory deadlines as set out in the election rules, which can be used to assist you in your planning. **UKPGE Election timetable generic (DOCX)** **UKPE By election timetable generic (DOCX)** Date-specific timetables will be available on our website ahead of a general election. You should ensure that you have contingency arrangements in place to enable you to respond and deliver a well-run election should a general election be called at short notice or a by-election arise. Once an election has been called you will need to review your plans and develop arrangements for the specific context and timetable of the poll. Although it is an ERO function, further information on the Voter Authority Certificate and Anonymous Elector's Document application deadline can be found here. Last updated: 27 September 2023 **Book traversal links for The election timetable** **Developing plans for the election** **Contingency planning** Contingency planning Your project plan should cover contingency planning and business continuity arrangements to enable all elements of the delivery of the election to continue in the event of any unexpected issues or disruptions. It is important to keep your contingency plans under review and to re-visit and amend them periodically during the run up to the poll. In doing so, you should consider the success and continuing appropriateness of any existing measures, identify any improvements and expose any gaps. You should also develop and maintain separate ongoing contingency plans to support the delivery of any unscheduled polls and by-elections that may occur. Your contingency planning should include arrangements for the key areas of risk to the delivery of the election including: **Contractors** You should ensure that any suppliers you use – such as your EMS provider and any external print providers – have their own detailed business continuity plans in place. You should be satisfied that their contingency arrangements are sufficient to enable you to perform your duties in the case of any interruptions in service whilst fulfilling their own contractual duties. For more information see our guidance on **Managing the procurement process for outsourced work** . **Venues** You should prepare a list of alternative venues that are available at short notice for each stage of the elections process and brief staff on the contingency arrangements for using these venues that may affect their role. For more information, see our guidance **Identify and book suitable venues and Last minute changes to polling stations** . **Staffing** You should identify solutions to enable you to respond to a sudden staffing shortage. You should liaise with your HR department who can use their expertise to assist you with your planning. Other departmental managers within your local authority, or neighbouring

authorities with reciprocal agreements in place may also be able to offer additional support in managing any requirements for temporary staff for specific parts of the electoral process. For more information see our guidance on [Allocating sufficient staff resources](#) and [providing training and Flexible staffing](#) . IT also plays a key role in many of the processes required to run the election. You should liaise with your IT services to ensure that you have adequate resources and contingency measures in place to allow you to perform your functions in the event of IT failure. This could include: improving any measures allowing remote working capabilities having dedicated IT support during the election period storing certain files and documents locally to enable them to be accessed more easily sourcing any spare or alternative equipment that could be used as a backup, e.g. printers, laptops, routers As part of your IT contingency planning, you should consider how you would produce Voter Authority Certificates in the event of IT or contractor failure. Security risks should also be considered as part of your contingency arrangements, setting out how you will continue to deliver the election in the event of theft, fraudulent activity, a cyber-threat or any other security risk as identified in your risk register . You should liaise with the police and business continuity experts from your council to identify risks and put appropriate continuity measures in place. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has produced this guidance to help you assess the risks associated with IT and cyber-threats. Last updated: 30 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Contingency planning](#) [The election timetable](#) [Planning for the delivery of key processes](#) [Planning for the delivery of key processes](#) Your project plan should include details on how you will deliver the key processes, including nominations, postal vote opening, voting in polling stations, and verification and count. It should also include how you will meet your duty to ensure that the polling station is accessible to all voters. Our guidance on [understanding the barriers to voting](#) provides further information to support your planning Establishing realistic and robust assumptions can assist you in planning for delivering these key processes. Sound assumptions can provide useful evidence in explaining your decisions and you should therefore document them. Sharing the assumptions with stakeholders at an early stage will also allow them to be tested by others for robustness before the detailed planning has been completed and will help build confidence in your plans. Your planning should include assumptions covering expected: turnout on polling day turnout of postal voters number of candidates availability of staff speed and capability of staff timings for completing each process All plans and assumptions should be kept under regular review. This will help inform a realistic assessment of whether you will be able to deliver the overall plan, and whether and when it may be necessary to implement contingency plans . In all cases your plan should be flexible enough to allow you to respond if any of your assumptions change, covering what contingency actions you will take in such circumstances, and you should communicate with stakeholders throughout your planning process and be prepared to explain the reasons for the decisions you are taking. For key decisions, you should provide your reasons to stakeholders in writing. Turnout The expected turnout is a crucial factor in determining your planning and understanding what resources will be needed for most processes, in particular for polling stations and the verification and count. You should decide what the expected turnout is likely to be - taking into account the potential for late engagement and interest in the elections by which point scope for adjusting plans will be limited. Your turnout estimate should be based on the assumption that, as a minimum, the turnout of voters will be not less than the turnout at the last equivalent polls. You should also consider the patterns of return

rates at previous polls and anything that might affect this. For example, televised Leaders' debates at a general election could conceivably result in a late surge of registration and absent voting applications, altering the traditional pattern of when completed postal votes are returned, as well as have an impact on turnout. It is always safest to err on the side of caution when it comes to turnout as national and local developments can result in rapid changes to the actual turnout. The resources you have available to conduct these processes, including numbers of staff and size of venue, will also be a relevant consideration to your planning. The number of parties and/or candidates standing at an election will also affect your planning considerations. For example, a large number of parties and/or candidates standing for election could mean that: ballot papers will be large and staff and voters may be slower handling them more space will be required to accommodate the large ballot papers the counting process for separating the votes into bundles for particular parties and/or candidates may be slower and take up more space more space for candidates and agents may be required at the venues In order to establish the likely number of parties and/or candidates you should: make early contact with the political parties monitor expressions of interest monitor requests for nomination packs This information can then be taken into account when taking decisions on venues, count layout, necessary equipment and staffing requirements.

Staffing and timings You should look at the number of staff and the processes used at previous elections and the number of ballot papers that were processed. An evaluation of the processes and staffing ratios, and when the various stages of the election process were completed, can then be used to inform decisions for these elections. You should share these details and timings with stakeholders together with the assumptions that underpin them. Some stakeholders may hold expectations as to how quickly the processes can be completed which cannot be met in practice and this can lead to tension and frustration. To manage expectations, you should explain in some detail the processes involved and how long each stage is likely to take. For more on this, see our guidance on providing information on key election processes . Last updated: 30 May 2023

Book traversal links for Planning for the delivery of key processes

Contingency planning Allocating sufficient staff resources and providing training Allocating sufficient staff resources and providing training Your project plan should include identification of staffing requirements, including any necessary recruitment arrangements. It is essential that you identify the staff you will need and make the necessary appointments at the earliest opportunity. You should seek advice from your council's human resources department as necessary to ensure that the methods used to identify, recruit, employ and pay staff are robust and comply with all legal requirements. Following an assessment of the performance of staff used at previous electoral events, you may wish to contact staff used previously at an early stage in the planning process to check their availability. You will need to ensure that all staff are sufficiently trained to carry out their role(s). You should provide accessibility awareness training for all staff who interact with voters, including staff who support electoral services, to help improve their understanding of the needs of disabled voters and the importance of clear communication. Our guidance on accessibility contains further information on ensuring that those working on the poll are aware of accessibility needs. Last updated: 30 May 2023

Book traversal links for Allocating sufficient staff resources and providing training

Planning for the delivery of key processes

Establishing a project team Establishing a project team You should establish a project team to support you in carrying out your functions and in delivering a well-run election. In addition to

yourself, your project team should include any appointed deputies, other elections staff members and the ERO, where this is not yourself. It should also include any other key personnel you consider appropriate such as: your council's communications team HR colleagues finance colleagues IT your contact centre/front of house staff facilities staff your local Police single point of contact (SPOC) Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, your project team should include the ERO and other relevant elections staff members from the other local authority area(s) to enable effective liaison in the planning and delivery of the polls. Establishing a project team The project team should have a clear remit and understanding of the tasks to be carried out. You should prepare a schedule of meetings at the planning stage, and keep a record of each meeting as an audit trail of what was discussed and of any decisions made. Where possible, the (A)RO should chair any project team meetings. Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Establishing a project team Allocating sufficient staff resources and providing training Deputy (Acting) Returning Officer appointments Deputy (Acting) Returning Officer appointments You should put in place deputy arrangements in case you are unable to act personally as (A)RO. You may appoint deputies to discharge all or any of your duties 1 and this can be for a limited time period or until further notice. Any appointed deputies should have the skills and knowledge required to carry out the functions they have been assigned such as assisting with the receipt of nomination papers, managing the postal vote process or adjudication of doubtful ballot papers. You should confirm any appointments in writing and include details of the functions that the deputy is authorised to exercise on your behalf. The acceptance should also be made in writing. A Deputy (A)RO is liable, in the same way as the (A)RO, for a breach of official duty. 2 Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries you should consider whether you want to delegate some of your functions in full or in part to a senior officer at the other local authority/authorities. 1. Section 28(5) Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Section 63 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Deputy (Acting) Returning Officer appointments Establishing a project team Working with the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) Working with the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) If you are not also the ERO, you will need to liaise closely with them to obtain the relevant registration and absent voting data. You should ensure that data protection is considered and that any transfer of data is secure. If there is a need for exchanging data electronically, you should agree the timings for the exchange of data and ensure that a test of the process is carried out ahead of the first scheduled transfer. There will be updates to the data at a number of points within the election timetable, as the ERO must publish two interim election notices of alteration as well as the final election notice of alteration. 1 The Commission has published a timetable containing the dates related to the publication of these notices. UKPGE Election timetable generic (DOCX) Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries you should liaise closely with the ERO and elections staff at the other local authority/authorities to put in place arrangements for the transfer and receipt of data, including any updates following the publication of the interim and final election notices of alteration. As part of developing these arrangements, you will need to establish how you will manage the data you receive in

practice, including whether your software system can process data received from the other local authority/authorities, particularly where they use a different electoral management software system. Further information on practical issues relating to absent voting in cross boundary constituencies can be found in Absent Voting . 1. Section 13 (AB) Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1

Last updated: 27 September 2023 Book traversal links for Working with the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) Deputy (Acting) Returning Officer appointments Appointing staff for specific election processes Appointing staff for specific election processes You will need to appoint staff to help you undertake the various election processes. You should identify staffing requirements and put processes in place for recruiting the necessary staff. You should have access to a database of staff used at previous elections to help with this, and should also get advice from the HR team at your council on any external recruitment needs you may have. Staff can also often be recruited from among council employees. Local authorities can permit their staff to work on the election, but they are not required to do so. When identifying and recruiting staff, you should consider the skills appropriate to each role and use these to create a suitable job description. For example, those with experience working in finance could be recruited for the recording of unused ballot papers at the verification and count, or to work at postal vote opening sessions to record the daily totals. As there is no age restriction for staff working on specific election processes, you could liaise with local further and higher education establishments to identify young people who could be recruited to work at polling stations or at the verification and count, which could also help to boost their engagement with the democratic process. You can find more information on the payment of fees to staff in our section on Accounting for the election . Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Appointing staff for specific election processes Working with the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) Appointing staff for the issuing and opening of postal votes Appointing staff for the issuing and opening of postal votes You should identify staffing requirements for your postal vote issuing and opening sessions. The following staff may be required: specially trained supervisory staff clerical staff IT staff You must not appoint any person who has been employed by or on behalf of a candidate in or about the election. You should be mindful of the demands on time the issue and opening of postal votes can place on core staff when considering your staffing needs. Staffing for issuing of postal votes There will be a number of additional postal vote issues in the immediate run-up to polling day to pick up those who have applied to vote by post and to register in the lead-up to the registration deadline. 1 You will need to consider how to manage this, ensuring postal votes can be issued to electors as early as possible. For further information see our guidance on issuing postal votes . You should also take into account the total number of current postal voters and projected turnout of postal voters when deciding on your staffing arrangements, as well as the potential for late engagement and interest in the election by which point scope for adjusting plans will be limited. You should plan for the possibility of a high turnout but, as a minimum, you should assume that the turnout of postal voters will be not less than the turnout of postal voters at the last equivalent polls. Your review of previous electoral events will give you an indication of how robust your previous staffing assumptions were. You may need to revise this assessment after you have received the final postal voters' lists from the ERO. You should build sufficient flexibility and contingency into your staffing arrangements to deal with a last-minute increase in numbers of postal voters, an unexpected increase in turnout, or varying volumes of postal votes being returned on

different days. For example, if there are televised leaders' debates, this may have an impact on the pattern and volume of returns and this should be part of your considerations when determining your staffing requirements. Your arrangements also need to be such that you can ensure you can effectively manage those delivered to polling stations on polling day. Managing contractors If you decide to outsource all or part of the postal vote issuing process you should designate a member of the project team to monitor outsourced work and specifically to attend those parts of the issuing process that have been contracted out. This person should also monitor the work of the contractor, which should include carrying out tasks such as: spot checking to ensure that the postal voting stationery does not contain any errors checking the postal ballot packs are being correctly collated ensuring that any postal votes that need to go overseas are being prioritised Further guidance on managing contractors and suppliers can be found in our guidance on Managing contractors and Suppliers . Staffing for opening of postal votes How the verification of personal identifiers is to be carried out, including how much of this process is automated and how much of it needs to be done manually, will also impact on the numbers of staff you will require for opening returned postal votes. You must have arrangements in place to enable the checking of 100% of postal vote identifiers. 2 You can find more information in our guidance on the postal vote opening process . 1. Section 13B Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Regulations 84 and 85A Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Appointing staff for the issuing and opening of postal votes Appointing staff for specific election processes Appointing polling station staff Appointing polling station staff You must appoint and pay a Presiding Officer and such Poll Clerks as may be necessary to staff each polling station. 1 This cannot be any person who has been employed by or on behalf of a candidate in or about the election. 2 There are some responsibilities that cannot be undertaken by a Poll Clerk, such as decisions on whether an elector has produced an acceptable form of ID, or ordering someone to leave the polling station. You have flexibility to use the Poll Clerks you employ to carry out any other functions and responsibilities needed to deliver polling station voting effectively, including: the polling process – checking the register, checking photographic identification, marking the register, filling in the CNL and other statutory paperwork such as the Ballot Paper Refusal List (BPRL), etc. facilitating checks of photographic identification in private, where requested managing the flow of electors and ensuring the secrecy of the ballot providing electors with additional information and support including: answering questions about the process providing information about the instructions for voting and the requirement for photographic identification explaining the types of photographic identification that can be used providing advice and assistance to support the accessibility of the poll When deciding on the allocation of electors and staff to polling stations, having regard to our guidance on the recommended minimum staffing levels for polling stations and on how staff could be deployed in different scenarios , will help ensure that voters can receive a high-quality service. 1. Rule 26 Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Rule 26 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Appointing polling station staff Appointing staff for the issuing and opening of postal votes Recommended minimum staffing levels for polling stations Recommended minimum staffing levels for polling stations It is for you to consider each polling station individually and make decisions about allocating staff and electors accordingly. We

recommend the following ratios when allocating electors and staff to polling stations: Electorate (excluding postal voters) ■ Recommended number of polling station staff ■ ■0 - 1,250 ■3 (1 Presiding Officer and 2 Poll Clerks) ■1,250 - 2,250 ■4 (1 Presiding Officer and 3 Poll Clerks) A polling station should not have more than 2,250 electors allocated to it. This is lower than the level set out in previous guidance but has been set to reflect the additional requirements of the polling station voting process, for both polling station staff and electors, as a result of changes made by the Elections Act 2022. The ratios outlined assume the election is not combined. In the event of combined polls, you should think about whether the management of more than one poll may require additional staff. These ratios are guidance only, they are not mandatory. When making decisions on the allocation of electors and staff to polling stations, you should fully consider the particular circumstances of each polling station and the needs of your electorate as a whole, and document the reasoning behind the decisions you make. As a minimum you should consider: any particular local circumstances such as population increases (for example, due to any new housing developments since your last polling place review), demographic trends, and any known needs of your local electorate (for example, any areas where you expect you may need to undertake an ID check in private more often) levels of postal voters the potential for late engagement including any local or national issues which may affect the turnout and interest in the election — as a minimum you should assume that the turnout will be not less than the turnout at the last equivalent election the spread of voters during the day – for example, if recent trends show a large number of voters attending the station in the morning, ensure your staffing ratios allow for this and will prevent large queues from forming additional support electors may need in understanding any recent changes to the electoral process, especially where this may impact differently depending on which polls are taking place how the voter will move through the voting process from entering to exiting the polling station, taking into account the polling station size and layout at combined polls, the impact the combination of polls will have, such as on the time taken to issue ballot papers and for voters to complete more than one ballot paper This list is not exhaustive, and you should also consider any other factors that you consider appropriate. Our accessibility guidance contains additional factors to consider when planning your staffing levels at the polling station. Each decision should be taken on a case-by-case basis and not for the voting area as a whole. In addition to considering the number of staff you will need to manage each polling station, you should think about how you will be able to respond positively to requests from voters to have their ID checked by a female member of staff. Ideally you will have a female member of staff at each polling station, but where this is not possible then you should think about how you can deploy other staff flexibly to meet the request, for example by utilising female polling station inspectors who have been delegated the authority to carry out these checks. More information on polling station inspectors can be found below. As well as keeping a record of decisions made you should maintain a plan which ensures you are able to respond to any issues, for example, dealing with a queue at one or more polling stations in your area at particularly busy times such as traditionally after work rush, or in the run-up to close of poll at 10pm. Voters in a queue at their polling station at 10pm must be issued with their ballot paper. Polling station inspectors As well as making decisions on the number of polling station staff you will need, you should also ensure that you have sufficient numbers of polling station inspectors to support the delivery of the poll in your area. In making your decision, you should consider

factors such as your local geography and the experience of polling station staff in each polling place, as well as any impact of the new processes that need to be delivered as a result of the Elections Act 2022. For example, you could use female polling station inspectors to support electors who request to have their ID checked in private by a female member of staff where no female member of staff is available in a specific polling station at that time. To facilitate this, you would need to appoint the polling station inspector as a Deputy (A)RO for polling day. You should ensure that any such appointment is clearly defined to reflect that it is solely for the purpose of making decisions on the validity of ID as part of any checks they carry out. More information can be found in our guidance Appointment of polling station inspectors. Examples of staff deployment at a polling station

There are different options open to you for deploying staff within polling stations. Your plans should be sufficiently flexible to allow you to deploy staff to respond to specific issues or needs that may arise throughout polling day. Here are some examples: if you have one Presiding Officer with two additional staff allocated to a polling station, all three should be trained in the process of issuing ballot papers, checking photographic identification and filling in the associated paperwork. While two staff members carry out the issuing process, the other could act as an information officer to provide advice and assistance to voters as required if a polling place contains multiple polling stations, a member of staff could be used as an information officer covering all stations to assist with directing voters to the correct polling station and providing advice and assistance to voters as required. Staff from one polling station in the polling place could also be used to assist staff in another polling station within the same polling place if required, for example as a result of a high number of voters attending one of the stations at a particular time when the other station is quiet. You may also consider appointing a team of back-up polling station staff to be deployed flexibly as needed, such as at peak times or in the run-up to close of poll, or to respond to particular issues that may arise throughout polling day. For example, you could base extra staff at the largest/busiest polling place you have in an area and deploy them to other stations in the area when needed. If parts of the electoral area are not easily accessible, you could find it helpful to have teams positioned in different parts of the area. The UK government have confirmed that the funding being provided to support additional staff in polling stations as a result of measures in the Elections Act 2022 is able to be used flexibly. For example, not only to employ additional poll clerks within polling stations but also to support the appointment of additional polling station inspectors or back-up staff as appropriate. You will also need to think about how you will train staff so that you can deploy them flexibly on polling day. Further guidance on training can be found in Providing training to all relevant staff. The Commission's handbook for polling station staff outlines in more detail the procedures staff should follow throughout polling day and at the close of poll. Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. Last updated: 30 May 2023

Book traversal links for Recommended minimum staffing levels for polling stations

Appointing polling station staff Appointing polling station inspectors Appointing polling station inspectors Polling station inspectors play an important role in the effective management of the poll. They provide an essential communication link between you and your polling station staff including dealing with queries and

problems arising on polling day. You should appoint polling station inspectors to visit and inspect polling stations on your behalf on polling day. In deciding on the allocation of polling station inspectors to polling places, you should consider: the geography of the area and travelling distance between polling places the number of polling stations in each polling place the experience of polling station staff at each polling station expected turnout levels and any particular local circumstances the number of visits polling station inspectors will be expected to make to each polling station during the day Duties of a polling station inspector Polling station inspectors should ensure that all of their assigned polling stations are: properly set up to take account of voter needs and contribute to the smooth running of the polling station fully equipped and accessible to all voters meeting your expectations of service to voters The polling station inspector should work with the Presiding Officers and polling station staff to identify and deal with any problems arising throughout polling day and at the close of poll, and should escalate any issues to you as appropriate. You should have a process in place for the ERO to communicate any polling day amendments to the register and emergency proxy applications. You should advise polling station inspectors of their role in this, if any. Initially, polling station inspectors should aim to visit all of their allocated polling stations as quickly as possible in order to be able to re-assure you that all stations have opened on time and are operating effectively. These initial visits could be preceded by a separate communication sent by Presiding Officers to their polling station inspectors, prior to the opening of the poll. For example, polling station inspectors could be notified via text message confirming whether the polling station is set up and ready for opening, and whether there are any issues, to help the polling station inspector prioritise their visits. Subsequent visits throughout the day can be used for a variety of purposes including: collecting postal votes answering any questions that polling station staff may have checking that all notices remain properly displayed delivering any missing or additional equipment that is required Female PSIs may also be required to check the photographic ID of electors who request to have their ID checked in private by a female member of staff where no female member of staff is available in the polling station at that time. In such cases, the PSI should be appointed as a Deputy RO for polling day for the purpose of making decisions on the validity of ID as part of any checks they carry out. Our guidance on recommended staffing levels contain further information. Instructions for polling station inspectors You should provide polling station inspectors with clear instructions about their role and a checklist of tasks that they should carry out and complete during their polling station visits. This checklist also contains a list of what each polling station inspector should receive prior to polling day. Completed checklists can also be used to inform an evaluation of the suitability of polling stations as part of the post-election review process. You can find a copy of the checklist to print and use in our planning the election resources section. Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Appointing polling station inspectors Recommended minimum staffing levels for polling stations Flexible staffing at polling stations Flexible staffing at polling stations You should prepare a list of staff you can approach who can step into a role where a person is unavailable – for example, due to sickness. The list should include staff that would be able to work at very short notice. While appointing stand-by staff may not always be practical or feasible within your budget, you should be prepared to deploy staff flexibly on polling day to respond to specific issues that may arise. You may also wish to rotate staff appointed within your polling station to undertake different roles through the course

of the day, such as providing information to those entering the polling station and checking voters have brought the correct photographic ID to be able to vote. You could also consider appointing part-time Poll Clerks to provide assistance at expected peak polling hours or in the run-up to 10pm. In addition, you could appoint a team of back-up polling station staff to be deployed at peak times to specific polling stations or to respond to specific issues that may arise throughout polling day or at the close of poll. If parts of the constituency are not easily accessible, it may be helpful to have teams positioned in different parts of the constituency area. To be able to deploy staff flexibly on polling day, you will need to train staff appropriately. You should train Poll Clerks and Presiding Officers in such a way as to ensure that both have the technical knowledge to carry out each other's roles if required and as far as the law permits. You can find further guidance on training in the section - Staffing and training . Polling station inspectors should receive the same training as polling station staff in order for them to be able to be deployed flexibly and carry out polling station duties if required. You should also provide an additional briefing for polling station inspectors, covering items that are specific to their role. You should give both polling station staff and polling station inspectors a copy of the Commission's handbook for polling station staff and polling station quick guide, and instruct them to read both ahead of polling day and to bring their copies with them on polling day itself. You should give spare copies of the handbook and quick guide to polling station inspectors that they can provide to polling stations in the event of polling station staff forgetting to bring their copies on polling day. Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. Polling station quick guide – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Last updated: 30 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Flexible staffing at polling stations](#)
[Appointing polling station inspectors](#)
[Appointing verification and count staff](#)

To ensure that voters can have confidence that their vote will be counted in the way they intended, you will need to put in place appropriate staff resources to ensure the verification and count are timely. It is important that you ensure there are the right number of competent, skilled and knowledgeable staff – and that each member of staff is clear about their role – so that the count is run efficiently and effectively and according to the principles for an effective verification and count . You should also ensure there is an appropriate number of reserve staff in case of staff absence on the day of the count. You should consider appointing: senior staff to assist with the overall operation and co-ordination of processes and the calculation of the result staff and supervisors to deal with the secure transportation of the sealed boxes of postal ballot papers to the verification venue staff and supervisors to deal with the receipt of polling station materials and postal votes staff and supervisors to deal with the final opening of postal votes staff and supervisors to deal with the verification of used and unused ballot papers, spoilt ballot papers and the tendered votes list staff and supervisors to deal with the sorting and counting of votes porters, security staff and door attendants to deal with the security of the site person(s) with knowledge of the site to deal with the management of the facilities within and around the site responsible officer(s) to oversee the security of ballot boxes and relevant

stationery where there is a break in proceedings or where ballot papers need to be packaged up and delivered to another venue at the end of verification experienced media liaison staff any other members of staff you consider necessary While it may not be realistic to expect all verification and count staff to be fully utilised at every stage of the verification and count process, a responsive management plan which monitors activity levels and allows for reallocation of resources could reduce the length of time taken to complete key stages of the process. When developing your plans for staffing the verification and count, you will need to bear in mind that there is a requirement under the legislation to take reasonable steps to begin counting the votes as soon as practicable and within four hours of the close of poll. There will also be an expectation among candidates, parties and the media for results to be declared as soon as possible and this too will need to be kept in mind in determining staffing requirements. For processes commenced immediately following the close of poll, you should wherever possible not use staff who have been on polling station duty all day. You must not appoint any person who has been employed by or on behalf of a candidate in or about the election. 1 1. Rule 25(3) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Appointing verification and count staff Flexible staffing at polling stations Identifying support staff from your council Identifying support staff from your council You should identify support staff and ensure they are available to assist with any public enquiries you may receive in the run-up to the election. There may be opportunities to utilise your council's existing support staff to perform this role. The support staff that you utilise should be trained to understand that there are various barriers that disabled electors may face when accessing information or voting in a polling station. Disabled voters may contact the (A)RO to identify a particular area that they need support with in the polling station. You can find more information on understanding barriers to voting in our guidance. Managing enquiries from the public You should set up a dedicated team to deal with a range of basic enquiries, such as questions about whether or not a person is registered to vote, postal and proxy voting and the location of polling stations. Where you are not also the ERO, you will need to work with the ERO for your local authority as appropriate to facilitate this. Staff dealing with public enquiries should receive training to deal with them and also be provided with: agreed responses to frequently asked questions a list of the locations of polling stations details of key dates in the election timetable details of the process in place to escalate more complex enquiries to the election team We have developed a template of FAQs for front line staff which you can adapt to fit your local circumstances. FAQs for frontline staff at UK Parliamentary election ■- We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. Processing applications The ERO should consider whether they will need any additional support staff to assist with the processing of registration and absent vote applications in the lead-up to the election – and in particular in the lead-up to the registration deadline on the 12th working day before the poll. Where you are not also the ERO, you should liaise with them to understand how they will manage the likely increase in applications close to deadlines, so that all staff involved in the election and the managing of queries have a clear understanding and can inform electors appropriately. Further information on processing registration and absent vote applications in the lead-up to an election can be found in the Running Electoral Registration and Absent

voting sections of the Commission's guidance for EROs in England , Scotland and Wales . Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Identifying support staff from your council Appointing verification and count staff Developing a training plan

Developing a training plan You should establish a training plan at an early stage in your planning for the election which identifies the training needs of both permanent and temporary staff in the delivery of their roles. Each member of the team, whether permanent or temporary, needs to understand their particular role and any statutory obligations associated with the work they are undertaking. All staff should receive training on the legislative requirements and responsibilities relevant to their role, as well as training on understanding accessibility needs , ensuring equal access and good customer care. Your plan should also include how you will evaluate the training sessions and materials used in order to inform future planning. If you have training or learning and development personnel within your council they may be able to assist you with this process. Data protection training Whilst the training you offer each member of the team will be tailored to their specific role, everyone handling personal data should be aware of and trained in the legal requirements for handling personal data in line with data protection legislation. You should discuss your plans for data protection training with your council's Data Protection Officer. Data protection training will help you to embed the data protection principles in your work and demonstrate compliance with data protection legislation. Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Developing a training plan Identifying support staff from your council Training postal vote issue and opening staff Training postal vote issue and opening staff You should make arrangements to train all postal vote issue and opening staff on the processes involved with each stage. This training may be provided immediately prior to commencement of the issuing and opening processes, but you should provide them with guidance notes in advance. However, you should consider training supervisory staff a day or two in advance of the issuing or opening session so that they are fully aware of their duties and what will be expected of them. This training should cover: carrying out the required quality assurance checks, whether you are issuing postal votes in-house or are using an external contractor ensuring that the opening procedures and the verification process are correctly followed and an audit trail is maintained You should provide any person who will be undertaking the verification of postal vote identifiers, and has been delegated the authority by you to make decisions on postal voting statements, a copy of the Commission and Forensic Science Service guidance on signature checking, and instruct them to follow it. Forensic Science Service guidance You should also consider whether any additional training may be appropriate for anyone undertaking this role. You should ensure staff are trained accordingly to ensure that any personal data is handled in accordance with data protection legislation. Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Training postal vote issue and opening staff Developing a training plan Training presiding officers, poll clerks and polling station inspectors Training presiding officers, poll clerks and polling station inspectors Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and other front line staff are frequently the only members of your staff that voters will meet in person. It is essential that such staff are trained to understand their role and to perform their duties professionally and effectively, and are able to provide a high standard of customer care. Such staff need to be able to communicate well with all voters. To ensure that staff understand the barriers that some disabled people face when voting, accessibility issues should be covered in training. You should give polling station staff and polling station inspectors a copy of the Commission's handbook for polling station staff and polling

station quick guide and instruct them to read both ahead of polling day and to bring their copies with them on polling day itself. Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. Polling station quick guide – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Polling station inspectors will also need spare copies of the handbook and quick guide to give to polling station staff who have forgotten to bring their copies on polling day. All polling station staff should be required to attend a training session. The training session should address: the tasks to be carried out ahead of polling day the setting up and management of the polling station who can attend a polling station and the procedures to be followed on polling day itself including checking photographic ID, marking the register and filling in the required forms during the poll the need for polling station staff to be customer-focused and to offer assistance to all voters, including being aware of accessibility needs for disabled voters the security of election stationery, including returned postal votes the importance of handling personal data in line with data protection legislation the procedures to be followed at the close of poll health and safety issues You should provide polling station staff and polling station inspectors with contact numbers for use in the event of any problems. As well as numbers for the elections office, this should include a contact number for the police. Training all staff, including polling station inspectors, on the roles and responsibilities associated with working in the polling station can help provide contingency in the event of loss of staff. For more information see our guidance on Flexible staffing at polling stations . We have prepared resources to support your training including: a template PowerPoint briefing for polling station staff which you can update with any additional local information you consider necessary a quiz for polling station staff and role play exercises and scenarios that you can use as a mechanism for testing and embedding learning an exercise on completing the ballot paper accounts, to provide the foundation for an accurate verification a template graphical guide to packaging materials at the close of poll is also available, for you to adapt and provide to polling station staff Training polling station inspectors You should provide an additional briefing for polling station inspectors, covering items that are specific to their role and ensuring they are aware of the checklist for polling station inspectors. We have developed a template checklist for polling station inspectors that you may find helpful. Checklist for polling station inspectors (DOCX) Your training should communicate that polling station inspectors play an important role in the effective management of the poll and should be able to deal with queries and problems arising at the polling station on polling day. Polling station inspectors must ensure that all of their assigned polling stations are properly set up, fully equipped and accessible to all voters and that they can identify and deal with any problems arising. For example, if there are any queues building up the polling station inspector should be able to find a solution to reduce them. In certain circumstances, such as if a private check of a female elector's photographic ID is required for religious reasons, female Polling Station Inspectors may also be required to attend a polling station to check the photographic ID if a polling station only has male staff. Training should also emphasise that the collection of postal votes as directed by the Returning Officer is a task that must be conducted

with care, making sure that all those collected are properly and accurately logged.

At no time should these postal votes be left in a vehicle while the polling station inspector visits the polling stations. You should make the polling station inspector aware that they may be involved in liaising with the elections office regarding clerical errors on the register and emergency proxy applications. You should ensure that each polling station inspector receives the following items: a mobile phone (if required) an ID badge clearly showing their name as a representative of the Returning Officer a label for the car windscreen with appropriate identification a map of the area identifying the location of all of the polling places allocated to the inspector the names of all polling station staff and a contact number for each of the Presiding Officers a contact list of all of the key holders for the polling places in the allocated area (it may also be useful to have the contact number of a locksmith in case a lock is jammed) a contact number for the police a ballot box with spare seals a sundries box with spare stationery and forms polling station handbooks and quick guides a copy of the register for each polling station spare ballot papers (sealed and only to be used in an emergency) a wallet/packet with a sealing mechanism to collect returned postal votes, along with a log for recording number of postal votes removed, the time of collection and details of the person who collected them a spare blank ballot paper account a polling place/station checklist to be completed for each polling place copies of the Code of conduct for tellers and any other local instructions Last updated: 27 September 2023 Book traversal links for Training presiding officers, poll clerks and polling station inspectors Training postal vote issue and opening staff Training and briefing verification and count staff Training and briefing verification and count staff You should ensure that staff receive appropriate training and instructions to allow them to carry out their duties effectively and in accordance with the law. Training should include what staff should look for when examining ballot papers to determine which should be included in the count. You should brief all verification and count staff so that they are fully aware of their duties and what will be expected of them. All briefings should, as a minimum, cover the procedures relevant to the roles. The processes involved at the verification and count can be complicated and you may find that the best way of training senior staff is to prepare a small scale 'mock' verification and count with a few hundred ballot papers. This will give staff the opportunity to physically work through the processes involved, completing the necessary paperwork and adjudicating on the sample ballot papers. This requires some resource to achieve but it can be a valuable tool in ensuring the verification and count runs smoothly and is timely on the night. Prior to the start of the verification and count proceedings, you should undertake a walk-through of the procedures you are expecting everyone to follow so that everyone is aware of what is expected of them at each stage, and how the different roles relate to each other. Further information is available in our guidance on the principles of an effective verification and count . Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Training and briefing verification and count staff Training presiding officers, poll clerks and polling station inspectors Identify and book suitable venues and plan layouts Identify and book suitable venues and plan layouts You should identify appropriate venues for all election activities as early as possible. Your project plan should cover the identification of suitable venues for all processes that you are responsible for. You should contact the managers of these premises at an early stage to inform them of the dates, and make the necessary booking arrangements. This will highlight where any venues are not available and should allow sufficient time to act on the information and identify alternative

premises. Ensuring venues are accessible As part of your review of previous electoral events, you should have undertaken an evaluation of the accessibility of venues used. The results of this should be used to inform your planning and to ensure that any identified barriers to access can be overcome. Under the Equality Act 2010, service providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to avoid putting people with disabilities at a substantial disadvantage compared to people who are not disabled. 1 You should work closely with experts on access to premises or facilities for disabled people in order to comply with the duty. The equalities officer at your local authority should be able to provide you with advice and assistance. 1. Sections 20, 29 and 31 Equality Act 2010 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 30 May 2023

Book traversal links for Identify and book suitable venues and plan layouts Training and briefing verification and count staff Postal vote issuing and opening venues and layouts Postal vote issuing and opening venues and layouts When selecting your venue(s) for postal vote issuing and opening sessions you should take into account the: lessons learnt from previous electoral events volume of postal ballot packs to be issued estimated volume of returned postal votes intended workflows IT requirements security and storage requirements presence of disabled access, both to and within the venues Your layout plans should include the: number and positioning of staff equipment needed, including electricity and network points workflows to be followed When mapping out workflows, you should take into account factors including any lessons learnt from previous electoral events and the expected turnout. If your last postal vote opening session is to take place at the verification and count venue, you should ensure that your verification and count layout plan makes provision for this. The process of producing layout plans will help identify any potential issues prior to the setting up of the venues and will allow for any changes to workflow or the positioning of staff or equipment to be made in good time. Layout plans also contribute towards transparency, as these plans can be handed out to anyone entitled to be present in order to help them to follow what is happening, where and when. You should ensure that whatever layout you choose, it is accessible to all those working on the processes and those entitled to observe them.

Considerations for observation of outsourced postal vote issue If you have outsourced the issuing of postal votes, you will still need to be satisfied that your contractors have made adequate arrangements to administer the issue effectively and in a transparent manner. As part of this, you could ask your contractor for copies of their proposed layout plans. These plans would also help to ensure that any observers present understand the processes that are being followed, and will be of particular assistance for your staff appointed to conduct spot-checks during the printing, collation and issuing of postal ballot packs. You should designate a member of the project team to monitor any outsourced work and the work of the contractor, specifically attending those parts of the issuing process that have been contracted out. Further guidance on quality assurance of the production and delivery of election materials can be found in Quality assurance and proof checking of election material . Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Postal vote issuing and opening venues and layouts Identify and book suitable venues and plan layouts Booking suitable polling stations Booking suitable polling stations As part of any Polling Place Review, you should evaluate the suitability of the polling stations that are available for use in the appropriate electoral areas. It is essential that polling stations provide sufficient space for voting to take place. Ideally, you will have the choice of a range of fully accessible buildings, conveniently located for electors in the area, with owners willing to hire them out for polling station use at

low cost. Unfortunately, in practice, this is often not the case and in some areas there may be little choice available. You will need to take access needs into account when planning the layout and set up of polling stations to ensure that all voters receive a high-quality service. This should include disabled voters who may need additional equipment or seating. More guidance is available on the types of equipment you may need to consider in our guidance on providing equipment at the polling station. The size of polling stations should be big enough to enable a clear flow of voters to try to reduce the risk of congestion or queues. You will also need to ensure there is an area identified for checking photographic ID in private, if requested. ■ You should be able to demonstrate that assessments have been conducted of the polling stations to be used at the election. Where access problems exist, you should document the problems, identify potential improvements and record any action taken to try to remedy these problems. You should ensure that any additional equipment required to make the polling station accessible will be delivered and set up before the opening of the poll. The polling station handbook provides further information on how to set up polling stations to ensure they are accessible for all voters. [Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election \(PDF\)](#) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. Last updated: 30 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Booking suitable polling stations](#) [Postal vote issuing and opening venues and layouts](#) [Use of schools as polling stations](#) [Use of schools as polling stations](#) Schools that are publicly-funded, including academies and free schools, may be used as polling stations free of charge, and the legislation allows you to require a room in such schools for use as a polling station. 1 You are also entitled to use, free of charge, any publicly-funded room as a polling station. 2 You will, however, need to pay for any lighting, heating, etc., costs incurred when using such rooms as polling stations. 3 You should liaise with the relevant schools and managers of publicly-funded rooms at the earliest opportunity to confirm that you want to use certain rooms within their premises as polling stations. 1. Rule 22(1)(a) Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) 2. Rule 22(1)(b) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) 3. Rule 22 RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#) Last updated: 30 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Use of schools as polling stations](#) [Booking suitable polling stations](#) [Last minute changes to polling stations](#) [Last minute changes to polling stations](#) There may be circumstances (e.g., flooding, fire, vandalism) when a change of polling station is required at short notice. As part of your contingency planning, you should compile a list of stand-by or portable polling stations that could be used in such circumstances. Local authorities are responsible for designating polling places and polling districts and you must designate a new polling station within the same polling place. 1 Usually, if there is a need to change the polling place, council agreement will be required. If delegation procedures are in place, you should follow these and contact the person or persons who are entitled to make changes to the scheme of polling places. However, flood, fire or vandalism occurring in the immediate lead-up to polling day could constitute a ‘special circumstance’, enabling you to designate a polling station outside the polling place without the need to seek council agreement. You should amend and republish the notice of situation of polling stations to reflect any changes to your polling stations. There are a number of mitigating measures you can take to ensure that electors who are affected by a late change to a polling station are able to vote with minimum disruption. You should have

a protocol for what to do in case of a last-minute change. As a minimum, you should: use social media to inform electors that there has been a change to a polling station if time allows, send out a letter to all affected electors informing them of the change to their polling station if time allows, use the local media to disseminate information to the affected electors – for example, through issuing press releases put up signs at the old polling station informing electors about the change, including directions to the new one display clear and visible signage at the new polling station Where any last minute changes to polling stations are required, ROs should ensure equipment to support disabled voters is still provided. 1. Rule 25(3) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Last minute changes to polling stations Use of schools as polling stations Verification and count venues and layouts Verification and count venues and layouts You should ensure that the verification and count processes are designed and managed to secure an accurate result, with a clear audit trail and that they are transparent, with everything carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend. The verification and count may take place at different venues and in these circumstances you will need to take into consideration travel to the different locations and impact on timings, steps required to package up the ballot papers in accordance with the relevant election rules, and secure transportation to the count venue. Selecting the venue(s) When selecting the venue for your verification and count, you should consider: convenience of the location of the venue lessons learnt from previous electoral events access arrangements for vehicles and parking entrances for those entitled to attend and staff, and for the delivery of the ballot boxes disabled access, both to and within the venue size of the venue taking into account: the space required to conduct the verification and count processes sufficient storage space for parcels, ballot boxes and other equipment adequate space for those entitled to attend and observe proceedings at the count lighting within the venue and externally heating of the venue platform or stage for announcing the results, and for making regular announcements throughout the proceedings acoustics within the venue internal and external IT and communication systems facilities for those attending the verification and count media requirements furniture requirements security and storage requirements contingency arrangements to address the risk of a loss of venue You should ensure that any equipment is tested in advance of the verification and count and that you have contingency arrangements in place in case of equipment or power malfunction. Planning the layout You need to ensure that all your processes are transparent, with everything at the verification and count carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend enabling them to have confidence that the count process is well-managed and so that they can have confidence in the result. You should prepare layout plans of your verification and count venue(s) at an early stage. A good layout will be informed by the verification and count model you decide to adopt, consideration of the workflows you intend to follow and the space you will have available. To avoid any issues at the verification and count you should put yourself in the position of a candidate or agent when planning the layout to test whether the arrangements deliver the necessary transparency. However, you also need to ensure that the work of your staff is not disrupted by those observing the process. In considering the layout and organisation of the verification and count, you should consider that: appropriate security arrangements are in place to ensure that only those eligible to attend actually do so there are sufficient tables to accommodate the number of verification and counting staff you have appointed and adequate space for the processes to be carried out

efficiently the layout of the tables: takes into account the number of counting agents that are likely to be appointed to oversee the verification and count, as well as others entitled to be present allows easy viewing by all of those entitled to be present takes into account the number and size of the ballot papers the space around the tables and circulation areas has been maximised and any obstructions removed there is sufficient seating for those entitled to attend proceedings the public address system is in working order with sufficient range the requirements of the media have been considered, e.g. by the provision of a separate media area, as they are likely to require space for their specialist (sometimes bulky) equipment the health and safety of all those attending has been assessed, for example: any cabling from equipment or media cameras should not present a trip hazard to anyone at the proceedings free access to emergency exits should not be obstructed in any way maximum venue capacity should not be exceeded Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Verification and count venues and layouts Last minute changes to polling stations Use of designated areas Use of designated areas You should consider designating areas for specific functions and identify what furniture and equipment will be required for each. Arrival at the venue Car parking and vehicle access It is advisable to designate different parking areas for candidates, agents and observers, and for staff. It can be helpful to have a designated entrance and exit to the car park, to avoid congestion, such as when ballot boxes are arriving from the polling stations. It may be useful to have staff supervising the car park at this time. Any staff working in the car parking area should be equipped with appropriate safety wear such as high-visibility jackets, and should be trained to deal with a large volume of traffic including, for example, counting agents arriving at the proceedings and polling station staff arriving with ballot boxes. Entrance Staff should be positioned at the entrance(s) to check whether people seeking to enter the verification and count are entitled to do so. It can be helpful to have different entrances for staff and for other attendees. Additionally you should ensure that your entrance arrangements avoid creating a bottleneck which could delay the start of the verification and count. Receiving area This is where ballot boxes, ballot paper accounts and other polling station stationery and equipment will arrive for checking in and sorting. Ideally, this area should have an entrance separate from that used by other staff, candidates, agents and observers, with direct access from the car park or loading area. Processing Areas Verification, reconciliation and results tables This is where the verification staff will verify the contents of the ballot boxes and reconcile the total number of votes. If laptops are to be used, you should take cabling arrangements into account and consider contingency arrangements in the event of equipment failure. If you need to communicate local count totals to an RO responsible for collating the results you will also require an area for this communication to take place. RO's table This is where you should keep law textbooks, Electoral Commission guidance, procedure notes, spare staff instructions, staff lists, stationery and other guidance materials available for reference. Count tables These should provide proper separation for the staff and counting agents. Where space permits, chairs could be provided close to these tables for counting agents and observers. You may wish to use measures to separate staff working at counting tables and those observing. However, these measures should not negatively impact on the ability of candidates and agents to oversee and scrutinise the verification and count processes, including the adjudication of doubtful ballot papers. Postal voting area Where postal votes are to be opened and the personal identifiers checked at the verification venue, you should allocate a separate area for processing unopened

postal votes received from polling stations. You will need to allocate adequate space to receive, open and verify the identifiers on these postal votes, and to allow observation of these processes. You will need to consider network and cabling arrangements if using verification software for personal identifier verification.

Tables for counted ballot papers Once ballot papers have been sorted and counted into votes for individual parties and/or candidates, as appropriate, they should be placed in bundles (e.g. 100 ballot papers) and put on a separate table, so that all of the votes for each party or candidate are kept together. Candidates and agents are likely to expect all the bundles for all the parties and/or candidates (as appropriate) to be placed in one central location so they can see the comparative numbers of votes for each party and/or candidate. This needs to be considered particularly when the verification and count has been sub-divided into areas smaller than the electoral area.

Other areas

Area for candidates, agents, observers and guests If possible, consider setting aside a separate area for candidates, agents, observers and guests with access to television coverage of the elections.

Area for refreshments Consider providing an area where counting assistants and other staff can have a drink and a snack – they may be advised to bring some drink and food along or this could be provided for them. The verification and count can be a lengthy process and it is important to have adequate refreshments available to help to maintain staff energy and concentration levels. To avoid the possibility of any spillages you should not allow counting assistants to eat or drink at the counting tables. However, you could consider allowing the consumption of bottled water (with non-spill tops) at the count tables. Many ROs also provide facilities for candidates, agents, observers and other attendees to purchase refreshments on site.

Media area The requirements for the media area will depend upon the types of media represented and their respective needs. For example, if television cameras are present, any lighting should not cause undue heat or glare which might impair the efficiency of the count, and cameras must not be allowed to film close-ups of the ballot papers. In addition, it is important that there are no trailing cables for count attendees to trip over, and that any equipment installed is safely positioned. You could consider establishing areas for media representatives that allow the opportunity to oversee the proceedings from a distance and fulfil their role to report on the progress and results throughout the event.

Declaration area A raised platform on which the local totals/results can be declared. If space allows you should gather candidates together for the announcements and allow acceptance and concession speeches. If you decide that these traditional arrangements will not be feasible at your venue, you should ensure that you are nevertheless able to communicate the results of the polls in line with legislative requirements and that all stakeholders, including media representatives, are aware of your planned arrangements in advance.

Last updated: 30 May 2023

Book traversal links for Use of designated areas

Verification and count venues and layouts

Managing contractors and suppliers

Managing contractors and suppliers You can outsource particular work required to deliver the election, but not the responsibility for ensuring compliance with the legislation. Do not automatically assume that outsourcing is your only and best option. You should make an assessment of the need to outsource. Your decision should be taken as part of an assessment of the costs, risks and benefits of outsourcing work, compared to in-house delivery by your staff. Your review of previous electoral events and consideration of the specific requirements for the election will help to inform your decision as to whether or not to outsource a particular function or task. If outsourcing is considered appropriate, your project plan should cover the management of contractors and suppliers and the development and

management of contracts. Finding printers If you decide to outsource production and are having difficulty finding a suitable printer, the British Printing Industries Federation, or in Scotland, Graphic Enterprise Scotland may be contacted for assistance: British Printing Industries Federation Head Office Unit 2 Villiers Court Meriden Business Park Copse Drive Coventry CV5 9RN Tel: 0845 250 7050 www.britishprint.com Graphic Enterprise Scotland C/O Maclay, Murray & Spens 1 George Square Glasgow G2 1AL Tel: 07771 865 947 www.graphicenterprisescotland.org Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Managing contractors and suppliers Use of designated areas Managing the procurement process for outsourced work Managing the procurement process for outsourced work If you decide to outsource work, you should commence the procurement process as soon as possible. Your local authority will have adopted standing orders or regulations relating to procurement and contracts. You should take advice from relevant staff at your local authority on the procedures to be followed and legal requirements for procuring supplies and services. This includes consideration of any equipment that you may need to procure for the training and processes you undertake in-house such as: issuing postal votes opening postal votes polling stations verification and count You will also need to have regard to the requirements of the Fees and Charges Order. You should document all stages of the procurement process. The risks of outsourcing should be clearly acknowledged in your documentation, with contingency arrangements identified and built into the process. Good public procurement practice recommends obtaining at least three written quotations from prospective suppliers. Some local authorities may have a standing list of approved contractors who have already been through a tendering process. It may be more effective and economical to use such existing contractors and systems. A detailed specification of requirements is essential for effective procurement, and should be developed for all outsourced work. Suppliers should be able to provide robust information on how they are going to deliver the work as required by the specification. As a minimum, the specification must: include a detailed description of what you want them to deliver and when provide clear instructions as to the necessary statutory requirements and obligations in relation to the particular work or services to be undertaken, such as directions as to printing and any content and layout requirements statutory deadlines contain relevant information about any data that will be provided, including processes for sending and receipt, and secure management of data be provided to all those invited to tender for the work, and the successful contractor must be able to meet all of the requirements of the specification make it clear that the successful contractor should be producing work or delivering services according to the specification and that no changes should be made during fulfilment of the contract without prior authorisation You should take steps to ensure that your selected contractor understands the requirements and has the experience and suitability to undertake the work being outsourced. The final price in the suppliers' proposals should not be the only consideration in choosing a contractor. Each bid should be carefully considered to assess exactly what it offers. The focus should be on value for money, with the final decision being a judgement based on the contractor's commitment to demonstrate: the best combination of the cost of the goods or service the ability to meet your requirements as laid out in the specification the capability to complete the work on time and to a high standard the provision of sufficient guarantees that the requirements of the data protection legislation will be met that the appropriate checks will be made relating to the suppliers' statements as to security, health and safety, and the secure handling of data Contractors may sub-contract work out and you should give prior written consent

before sub-contractors are to be used. You should ensure that any sub-contractors are aware of the specific requirements as detailed in the specification and seek assurances that the sub-contractor will be capable of delivering the work. Once you have made your final decision, you should take up any formal references of the chosen applicant. You should also notify unsuccessful applicants and be prepared to debrief them should they request it. You should have a formal, written contract in place with every contractor to which you have outsourced a function or task. It is essential that statutory requirements and their implications are fully explained wherever contractors are used, and that these requirements are explicitly stated in the contract for any work. Last updated: 30 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Managing the procurement process for outsourced work](#) [Managing contractors and suppliers](#) [Data Protection considerations for outsourced work](#) [Data Protection considerations for outsourced work](#) [When appointing a contractor or supplier you must ensure that they can provide sufficient guarantees that the requirements of data protection legislation will be met.](#) The requirements state that the supplier and any sub-contractors must ensure: the secure destruction of all electoral registration data and related materials at an agreed point the safe/secure storage of all live ballot papers the secure destruction of all data related to the ballot papers at an agreed point, for example, as soon as possible after polling day You should ensure that data protection is integral in any tender exercise (documenting your decision-making process) and that specific requirements are met in any contract awarded. You should liaise with your council's Data Protection/Information Officer to ensure compliance with data protection legislation. There are specific requirements under data protection legislation where you are using a contractor (i.e. a 'processor') to process personal data on your behalf. This would include, for example, where you are sending data to a contractor to election materials such as postal ballot packs or ballot papers. As RO you are the data controller and you remain ultimately responsible for ensuring that personal data is processed in accordance with data protection legislation. However, if a processor fails to meet any of its obligations, or acts against your instructions, then it may also be liable to pay damages or be subject to fines or other penalties or corrective measures. The ICO has provided guidance on 'Contracts and liabilities between controllers and processors' which you should consider in relation to your contracts with data processors. Please see our data protection guidance on [Using contractors and suppliers](#) for further information. Last updated: 30 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Data Protection considerations for outsourced work](#) [Managing the procurement process for outsourced work](#) [Developing contracts for outsourced work](#) [Developing contracts for outsourced work](#) The key to effective contract management is continuous and open lines of communication between you and your nominated contract manager, underpinned by clear and robust provisions in the contract as to the quality and timescales expected and required. The contract should outline basic details regarding the products and services being delivered, such as specifications, quantities, timeframes and cost. The contract must allow you to terminate the contract in the case of: a negligent act or omission an act resulting in you being unable to perform your statutory duties insolvency or dissolution of the company affecting the contract The supplier should also have adequate insurance in place to cover risks in relation to public liability and professional negligence. It should also support the quality assurance process by containing specific details of the following subject areas: Business continuity plans (BCPs) It is key that your contract arrangements should outline how your supplier will continue operating during an unplanned disruption in service. The detail may be

held outside of your formal contract, but you should ensure that you get assurance that such BCPs exist, and ideally you should be able to view these for your own reference.

Service level agreements (SLAs) Your contract should define exactly what services a supplier will provide and the required level or standard for those services. For example, this may include details of how quickly emails will be replied to, cover your rights and those of Electoral Commission representatives and accredited observers to access supplier premises for the purposes of observation, or to enable you to carry out quality assurance checks, agree the amount of slippage for any deadlines that is permitted by both sides under the contract, and how any failures to meet SLAs will be dealt with, both in terms of delivery and any related compensation. Such SLAs will help define what you can expect as a customer and how you and your supplier will work together. You should establish a procedure to enable you to carry out proof-checking on print-ready proofs and test documents within the agreed timescales. You should also agree a process to rectify any errors. Any variations from the agreed specification could result in a breach of legislation and any such breach is the personal responsibility of the RO, so any variations should be formally documented and signed off by you or by someone authorised to act on your behalf. The contract should be capable of being adapted to take account of unscheduled activities and last minute changes. You should ensure that contractors are aware of how registration deadlines may impact on timescales. For example, EROs have until the determination deadline (i.e. 6 working days before the poll) to receive the required evidence from a prospective elector under the exceptions process and make their determination. 1 If the elector also applied to vote by post, this will impact on the number of postal votes to be included in the last issue. If there is slippage, for example because of the time required to process bulk last minute postal vote applications, you should advise the contractors as soon as possible.

Data protection arrangements Ensure that you cover the specifics of the data to be processed, including the types of data, the duration of the processing and the rights and obligations of both parties. This should also include instructions for deleting data after the processing has been completed. It is a legal requirement under current data protection legislation to formalise the working relationship with suppliers contracted to process data you hold, in a written contract. For further information see our guidance on data protection considerations when using contractors and suppliers . You should also consider confidentiality clauses. While ROs are not subject to freedom of information requests, in the interests of transparency, consideration should be given to agreeing to some disclosure in the event of an FOI request. However, you and the supplier must not divulge any confidential information relating the terms of the contract. You must provide suppliers with a copy of the requirements of secrecy: Secrecy requirements - the poll (DOC)

Use of any sub-contractors Your supplier should identify where they will be subcontracting any element of the delivery of their services. For election suppliers this could be in relation to production, fulfilment or delivery of materials. Whilst the use of sub-contractors is commonplace to many industries, and should not in itself be a cause of concern, it is important that you are aware of whether your suppliers utilise the services of sub-contractors and the quality assurance processes they have in place to ensure that any work delivered by third parties maintains the standards as set out in your contract with them, including data protection and secrecy requirements.

Invoicing arrangements You should ensure that all supporting information in relation to the costs charged and will be sent by the supplier in accordance with the tender/quote. You must settle the invoice within the agreed time. 1. Section 13B

Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) Last updated: 30 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Developing contracts for outsourced work](#) [Data Protection considerations for outsourced work](#) [Preparing for managing the delivery of outsourced work](#) [Preparing for managing the delivery of outsourced work](#) As part of your preparations for the delivery of the poll, you should check in with suppliers to finalise arrangements well before the start of the election period. This is especially important if you have long-standing contracts in place and you should check that all contractual arrangements are still appropriate and fully meet your requirements, or if there have been changes of personnel on either side. As part of the pre-poll check in you should cover: who the key contacts are from each side, and who can be contacted when the primary contacts are not available (including out-of-hours) to ensure that work progresses without unnecessary delay the timeline for all stages of the work to be delivered, including: when you will provide data and other information to the contractor when each round of proofs will be provided to you for each item being produced, and the deadline for you to undertake your checks and respond for each the printing and fulfilment windows for each item, including when and how quality assurance checks will take place at each stage the despatch window for each item, including likely delivery dates given the delivery service to be used and the quantities being despatched on each date the management of files of additional electors/electors to be removed from the data (where applicable) any proposed use of sub-contractors; including in relation to the use of downstream access providers (DSAs) for the delivery of materials to electors the formats and communication channels to be used to provide information to suppliers (especially data from your EMS), share proofs and provide confirmation of receipt of data, items or sign-off of proofs etc. throughout the process, and for confirmation of despatch of items. This is important to agree in advance to support a clear audit trail of each stage of the process the exact specifications for each item being produced; items such as ballot papers must, by law, be printed in accordance with the directions for printing in the appendix to the relevant election rules. For example, you should check with your print supplier the maximum size of ballot papers that they can produce and what contingency arrangements will be in place should longer ballot papers be required how you will inform each other of any issues that arise, and the escalation process involved for decision making and resolution if needed Once you have agreed on all of the particular arrangements as above, you should produce a written document which contains all of the details and can be referred to throughout the process to ensure every stage is managed and delivered as per your mutually agreed specifications. It is important to remember that the agreed deadlines will apply to both parties, so you will need to make sure that you carry out all required actions on the dates agreed to support the completion of the work to the agreed timetable. You can find more guidance to support you when working with suppliers in our section on quality assurance and proofing of election materials . Last updated: 31 July 2023 [Book traversal links for Preparing for managing the delivery of outsourced work](#) [Developing contracts for outsourced work](#) [Working with mail delivery partners](#) [Working with mail delivery partners](#) Unless you are planning to hand-deliver all of your election material, you will need have early discussions with your mail delivery provider to finalise arrangements. Your focus should be to ensure that material is delivered to electors successfully and maximises the time available to them to receive the information and take action as necessary. Some print suppliers use Royal Mail for the end to end delivery of mail, however some use downstream access (DSA) providers for the initial part of the distribution process. This

involves the mail being collected and processed by a company other than Royal Mail, but then handed over to Royal Mail mail centres for final processing and delivery from local delivery offices. Regardless of how the delivery of your mail is managed, it is important to retain an overview at all times as responsibility remains with you even where you outsource different processes. You should discuss with your print suppliers to confirm whether they intend to use DSA providers as part of the process of delivering your election material, or whether items will be handed over directly to Royal Mail. This will help you understand the full delivery process and manage any issues should they arise. If you have agreed with your supplier that DSA providers will be used as part of the despatch and delivery process, you should get updates from your supplier on the progress of the delivery throughout. Managing delivery schedules You should liaise with your print supplier to manage the delivery of materials and ensure that voters receive the material as soon as possible so that they have the maximum amount of time to act on the information. In making these arrangements you should: agree and obtain formal confirmation on strict delivery schedules well in advance of the poll. For example, when the dispatch of election material will commence and last date of dispatch obtain postal dockets to confirm the number of documents dispatched and the dates of dispatch, for all issues. This will also help to identify any possible issues that may have arisen with regards to dispatch and feed into any subsequent evaluation of contractor performance, and enable you to provide information to voters on dates that they should expect to receive material You can find more information in our guidance on options for delivery of postal ballot packs . Royal Mail You should contact your Royal Mail account manager, and continue to liaise with them on a regular basis. At an early stage in your planning process you should ensure that: any business reply licences you hold are up to date you obtain the estimated delivery window of election material based on the despatch dates and method of delivery/postal package chosen. This will help you to manage communication channels to voters in your area and assist in early detection of any issues encountered with the delivery of election material any postal voting arrangements will help to maximise the time available to postal voters to receive, complete and return their postal vote the correct postage will be included on any postal votes being sent to addresses outside the UK Royal Mail knows where and when to deliver your returned postal votes to a secure point, ready for processing; you may wish to consider a timed delivery You will also need to consider whether to arrange for any final sweeps of postal votes and weigh up what the benefits of the sweep would be. Last updated: 30 May 2023 Book traversal links for Working with mail delivery partners Preparing for managing the delivery of outsourced work Maintaining the integrity of the election Maintaining the integrity of the election Voters and campaigners should be confident that: elections are free from fraud votes cast will be counted in the way that voters intended the results you declare are true and accurate Trust and confidence in the integrity of elections is essential but can be fragile. It will be difficult for you to rebuild trust or confidence which has been lost as a result of allegations or proven cases of fraud. You should put in place effective strategies for preventing electoral fraud from the outset. You will also need to be prepared to work with the police and prosecutors to subsequently investigate any allegations which might be made. You should cover your approach to tackling electoral fraud with parties, candidates and agents at briefing sessions and as part of any written information provided to them. You should also invite the police to attend any such briefing sessions and invite them to supply you with any relevant documentation to include in your information pack. This guidance deals

specifically with the risk of electoral fraud in relation to election processes. Information on dealing with integrity issues related to fraudulent registration or absent vote applications can be found in the ERO guidance: Identifying suspicious registration applications in England , Scotland and Wales Identifying suspicious absent vote applications in England , Scotland and Wales Offences There are a number of electoral offences specified in electoral law. Part 4 of our guidance for candidates and agents provides information on these offences. Dealing with allegations of financial offences Candidates and their agents must follow rules set out in legislation about how much they can spend at an election. We produce guidance for candidates and agents , parties and non-party campaigners outlining rules on spending. Any queries on election spending should be referred to the Electoral Commission's Party Election Finance team via email: pef@electoralcommission.org.uk or telephone: 0333 103 1928 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Maintaining the integrity of the election Working with mail delivery partners Assessing and managing the risk of electoral fraud Assessing and managing the risk of electoral fraud Although there are no definitive signs of possible electoral fraud, you will need to have in place mechanisms to identify any patterns of activity that might indicate potential electoral fraud. You should be aware of and consider all the data which is available to you, including whether there: have been unusual patterns of rejected ballot papers, including rejected postal ballot packs, at previous elections are any unusual patterns of registration or absent vote applications in the period leading up to the election We also have further guidance on identifying suspicious: registration applications in England , Wales and Scotland absent vote applications in England , Wales and Scotland Voter Authority Certificate applications in England , Wales and Scotland You are uniquely placed to identify incidents and patterns of activity that might indicate electoral fraud in your area. Taking early action to address possible fraud could help to avoid costly police investigations or legal challenges to the results of elections. You should ensure that you have mechanisms in place to assess the risk of electoral fraud in your area, including considering: whether there has been a history of allegations of electoral fraud in the area whether the election is likely to be particularly close and hard fought whether it is a marginal seat, which would need only a relatively small swing in the number of votes to change control whether there is a contest based on strong personal disagreements as well as political arguments risks where there is a highly mobile population with a frequent turnover of electors risks where there are electors who may be more vulnerable because of low levels of literacy and/or language ability Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Assessing and managing the risk of electoral fraud Maintaining the integrity of the election Planning your approach to maintaining the integrity of the election Planning your approach to maintaining the integrity of the election You should have in place plans and processes to maintain the integrity of the election. Your plans should be developed in consultation with the police single point of contact (SPOC) . The plans should include: how you will work with the local police and the SPOC, outlining the division of responsibilities so that there is clarity about each other's roles, clear lines of communication and agreement how regularly you would expect to be in contact how you will communicate your approach to maintaining electoral integrity with stakeholders and electors, in order to support public confidence in the election mechanisms for monitoring indicators of possible electoral fraud and thresholds for action in response specific steps to deal with any potential electoral fraud such as: an agreed approach for referring allegations of fraud for further investigation where appropriate

establishing a process for handling evidence, so that the police can carry out any forensic analysis any specific risks you have identified in addition to any general fraud detection plans Specific risks might include the risks associated with houses of multiple occupation such as student halls of residence or care homes where other people may have access to personal mail or where care givers may assist residents in care homes with completing postal vote applications or postal votes. Making plans to ensure the security of papers Your project plan should include a review of security arrangements with the local police to ensure the security of ballot papers throughout the process. Your security arrangements should prevent unauthorised access to or use of the ballot papers during all stages of the production process and storage between printing and the poll. Whichever method of storage you choose, it should be such that you can be satisfied that you have taken all necessary steps to ensure that ballot boxes and other items are kept securely at all times and cannot be interfered with.

Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Planning your approach to maintaining the integrity of the election](#) Assessing and managing the risk of electoral fraud Security considerations at the verification and count Security considerations at the verification and count You should consider the security risks of the verification and count as part of your integrity planning and include them on your risk register. Security risks may vary within the electoral area and you may need to take a different approach in particular instances. You should consider liaising with your local police single point of contact (SPOC) when deciding on the most appropriate method for transporting and ensuring secure storage of ballot boxes and other materials . We have developed a template risk and issues register that you can use to record any risks you identify. It contains examples that you will need to consider and, if necessary, mitigate, as well as a log to record any issues that emerge and that you will need to address. Alternatively, you may wish to include risks including our examples in any risk management documentation you have already developed. Risk register At the count venue, you should arrange to have robust arrangements in place to check in all the materials and paperwork delivered to ensure that nothing is missing. You need to decide how the ballot papers and other materials will be kept secure once they arrive at the verification and count venue, for example, by ensuring they are never left unattended. You should also take all necessary steps to ensure the security of ballot boxes and relevant stationery from the close of poll through to the declaration of the result, particularly where there is a break in proceedings . Where there is a pause in proceedings for the whole or any part of the period between 7pm and 9am the next day, you have a legal duty to place the documents under your seal and to take proper precautions for the security of the papers and documents. You should liaise with your SPOC on this. You will need to have contingency arrangements in place in the event of any evacuation from any premises and consider how you will ensure the security of the ballot boxes and other materials. You should also brief candidates and agents about your security arrangements, so that they can have confidence in the integrity of the count. Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Security considerations at the verification and count](#) Planning your approach to maintaining the integrity of the election Working with your single point of contact officer Working with your single point of contact officer Every UK police force has a named single point of contact (SPOC) officer for election-related crime. Your local police force SPOC will be a key partner to help you to ensure that any possible integrity issues are quickly identified and dealt with. You should make contact with your named SPOC at the outset of your election planning process. Once established, you should maintain this contact

throughout the election period. If you have any problems establishing contact with your SPOC, please contact your local Commission team . Your discussions should cover your plans for maintaining the integrity of the election and your mechanisms for identifying possible issues and what actions should be taken where any suspicions arise. A checklist of topics that should be considered at any pre-election planning meeting between you and your SPOC is available to support your discussions. You should agree an approach with your SPOC for referring allegations of fraud you may receive for further investigation where appropriate. For example, will you be the initial point of contact and refer allegations to the SPOC, or will they be the initial point of contact and advise you of allegations? You should also agree a mechanism for handling evidence, so that the police can carry out any forensic analysis, where necessary. The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice have provided guidance to local authorities for handling evidence . In addition, you should take all necessary steps to ensure that police officers (which can, in England and Wales, include police community support officers) attend at polling stations or call in during polling day, as appropriate, and discuss any security issues relating to any other aspects of the process including community safety for voters. You may also decide to undertake joint publicity work with the police to support your work in maintaining the integrity of the election. For example, you could collaborate on running public awareness campaigns within the electoral area to highlight what can be done to help detect and prevent electoral fraud. In England and Wales, a template memorandum of understanding between the Returning Officer and the police on the joint planning for elections and the reporting and investigating of electoral malpractice is available on the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice website . Police Scotland have provided guidance for Police Officers on preventing and detecting electoral fraud in Scotland. 2017 Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral fraud in Scotland Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Working with your single point of contact officer Security considerations at the verification and count Dealing with allegations of electoral fraud Dealing with allegations of electoral fraud It is important that once you have put in place your plans for monitoring and maintaining the integrity of the election in your area you offer clear advice to candidates, agents and electors on how to make allegations to ensure an effective and consistent approach is taken to managing them. You should ensure that all candidates and agents understand: how to raise specific concerns about electoral fraud relating to the election what type and level of evidence will be necessary to enable allegations to be investigated by the police how allegations will be dealt with what information and feedback they should be able to expect about the progress of any investigations The police will investigate any allegations of fraud until, following consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) or, in Scotland, with the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS), they are either satisfied that no further action is necessary or appropriate, or they forward the case file to the CPS or COPFS for prosecution. The police should keep you and, where appropriate, the ERO informed of the progress of the case. The Commission and the National Police Chiefs' Council (formerly the Association of Chief Police Officers) have supported the College of Policing to produce a manual of guidance for policing elections in England and Wales . Police Scotland, in consultation with the Electoral Commission and the Electoral Management Board for Scotland (EMB), has produced a guidance document for police officers in Scotland on preventing and detecting electoral fraud. 2017 Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral fraud in Scotland Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Dealing with

allegations of electoral fraud Working with your single point of contact officer Code of conduct for campaigners Code of conduct for campaigners Following consultation with Returning Officers, police forces and political parties, the Commission has produced a Code of Conduct for campaigners at elections and referendums. The code applies to all campaigners and sets out agreed standards of appropriate behaviour before and during an election or referendum. Code of conduct for campaigners - reserved elections in GB from January 2023 For England and Wales, the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice has developed a template letter seeking agreement from candidates to abide by the Code of Conduct and you should provide this to all candidates standing at a UK Parliamentary election in England or Wales. Police Scotland has also developed a template letter seeking agreement from candidates to abide by the Code of Conduct (see Appendix K in their guidance for Police Officers on preventing and detecting electoral fraud in Scotland) and you should provide this to all candidates standing at a UK Parliamentary election in Scotland. 2017 Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral fraud in Scotland The Code also makes it clear that if an (A)RO considers it appropriate to address further specific local risks, and has consulted with the relevant national and local parties, we will support them in introducing additional local provisions which go beyond the terms of the nationally agreed code. The Code also covers the requirement for photographic identification to be shown at polling stations. We consulted with the political parties that sit on the Westminster Parliamentary Parties Panel on this update to the code. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Code of conduct for campaigners Dealing with allegations of electoral fraud Planning for communication activity Planning for communication activity As RO, it is part of your role to ensure that everyone who wants to participate in the election is able to access clear information to enable them to do so. This section contains guidance to support the development of your plans for communicating with a range of audiences in advance of and during the election period. It includes guidance on public awareness activities to both encourage participation and to ensure that electors have the information they need in advance of polling day to assist them in ensuring they know what they need to do to vote. It also contains guidance on planning your engagement with candidates and agents to support their participation in the election. Early engagement is key to ensuring everyone has a good understanding the requirements of candidature, and resulting obligations during an election. Finally, it contains guidance to support your plan for communicating with the media and other stakeholders. General guidance for EROs on working with partners is contained in our guidance for EROs . Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Planning for communication activity Code of conduct for campaigners Engaging with voters Engaging with voters You must take appropriate steps to encourage the participation of electors in the election, and in carrying out such activity you must have regard to any guidance issued by the Electoral Commission. 1 Part of this engagement activity should include how you will communicate the voting process and support available for disabled voters . This should be both directly with local disability organisations and more general signposting to accessible communications, such as providing online versions of documents that are easy-read, compatible with screen-readers, or available in large print. Where you are not also the ERO, you should liaise with them to ensure that all of your activities are aligned and are designed to maximise impact ahead of the registration deadline. For more information on engagement as an ERO see our guidance on your public engagement strategy and registration plan . Your activity and messaging should aim to ensure that everyone who wants to vote has the information to

do so, and can vote using their preferred method. All outgoing communications should provide appropriate contact details to allow anyone to respond and obtain further information. When planning your activity you should consider and document: the identification of your target audience the objectives and success measures of the activity any risks –and mitigation of those risks resources – both financial and staffing plans for collaborative working with relevant local partners, including experts in the communications department of the local authority Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies Where your constituency covers more than one local authority area you should ensure that you liaise with the ERO and elections staff from the other local authority/authorities to develop a coordinated plan for public awareness activity across the constituency. Engaging with voters You should identify the most effective methods to ensure your public awareness activity reaches as wide an audience as possible and that it provides essential information electors need to enable them to take part in the election. You should use your website, social media and traditional methods such as notice boards to communicate this information. Information required by electors in order to successfully participate may include: details of the election itself the date and hours of poll different options for voting (e.g. in a polling station, postal or proxy voting) the location of polling stations any key deadlines (e.g. deadlines for applying for postal or proxy votes) how to register to vote requirement to show an accepted form of photographic ID in order to vote in a polling station how to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate or Anonymous Elector's Document how to vote (i.e. how to mark the ballot paper) assistance available to electors and how to request reasonable adjustments (e.g. equipment to enable disabled voters to vote independently in the polling station) and how to request information in alternative formats (e.g. braille, easy read, large print) how votes are counted how the result will be made known In the lead-up to scheduled polls, the Commission may run a public awareness campaign to encourage registration. Such a campaign will usually involve mass media advertising, working with partners and public relations activities. We will also provide resources that can be used locally, such as posters, online banners, template press releases and social media content. The Commission provides public awareness resources to support electors in understanding the requirement for photographic ID in relevant election types. This includes resources specifically for different groups who might need greater support to provide acceptable forms of photographic ID. The Commission will provide a suite of resources which can help you to promote information about the voting process and support available for disabled people, including resources which will signpost to guidance on accessible communications. This information is available with our guidance on Enabling and making voting easier in polling stations . We will provide you with information on our public awareness campaigns via the EA Bulletin . We also publish a voter registration newsletter, Roll Call, which aims to help local council communications teams stay up-to-date with the latest campaign information and resources. You and your council communications team can sign up to receive the newsletter here . Enquiries resulting from public awareness activity You need to consider how you will receive feedback and enquiries from both your general public awareness messaging and more focused activity such as specific assistance available for disabled electors. While most public enquiries will be easy to manage via your contact centre or support staff you should have a clearly communicated process for reasonable adjustment requests. Requests may include making polling station notices available in braille, easy read or in a pictorial format, or different types of equipment or support to enable a person to vote independently in a polling station

such as audio devices■ or hearing induction loops. Staff dealing with these types of enquiries will need to be trained to understand the barriers that voters may face, the different types of alternative formats for information that are available and the types of equipment that you provide in polling stations. More guidance on managing requests for additional support and equipment to voters is available. ■ 1. Section 69(1) and (2) Electoral Administration Act 2006 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Engaging with voters Planning for communication activity Production and publication of notices Production and publication of notices When you are required to publish notices you should post them in conspicuous places within the electoral area. This should include local authority offices, noticeboards, libraries and other public buildings. The notice may also be given in such other manner as you think fit. 1 In order to ensure that voters can receive the information they need, in an accessible format and within time for them to cast their vote, you should ensure that information on the poll, including the notice of election and notice of poll, are easily accessible to voters, such as through the local authority website. If you are making information available on your website you should ensure it is accessible to all voters. For example, if you are providing information in PDF format, you should be aware that if certain steps are not followed when creating PDFs they may not be compatible with screen readers and other assistive technologies. The UK Government has produced a guide to producing accessible PDFs you can refer to. You could also speak to your authority's equalities officer for advice. You should have robust proof-checking processes in place to ensure that there are no errors on the notices you are required to publish. Having robust proof checking processes in place could help detect any errors and avoid any potential data breaches before they occur. Guidance on the design of voter forms and notices The Commission's Making your mark guidance is focused on the design of usable and accessible forms and notices that put voters' needs first and enable them to vote confidently, according to their intentions. It provides guidance based on accepted industry good practice and findings from research with the public. Making your mark - design guidance for EAs Translation and formats of notices You are required, where you consider it appropriate to do so, to ensure that notices are translated or provided in another format. You may produce them: 2 in Braille in languages other than (or in Wales, and Welsh) using graphical representations in audio format 3 using any other means of making information accessible The nomination form and the ballot papers cannot be produced in any other language or format. However, both the enlarged hand-held and display copies of the ballot papers to be displayed in polling stations must have the instructions for voters printed at the top of the paper, and these words may be translated into languages other than or, in Wales, and Welsh. 4 Data protection considerations In accordance with data protection legislation, you will need to consider whether it is appropriate or necessary for the notices to remain published, on your website or elsewhere, beyond the expiry of the petition period for that election. Where the notices serve specific purposes, i.e. advising who will be a candidate at the election, once the election is over, and the opportunity to question that election has passed, they serve no further purpose. You should either remove the notices, or remove the personal data contained in the notices, once the petition deadline for the election has passed. Data protection legislation does permit personal data to be stored for longer periods if the data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, or for scientific, historical, or statistical purposes and subject to the implementation of appropriate safeguards. For notices of election results, for example, you should

retain these on your website as they are for public interest and historical and statistical purposes. You can find more information in our data protection guidance .

1. Section 200 Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.199B RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. S.199B(4) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. S.199B(5) and (6) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Production and publication of notices Engaging with voters Providing information to electors on polling station locations Providing information to electors on polling station locations Where is my polling station? is a common question in the run-up to polling day and on polling day itself. In partnership with Democracy Club, we provide a postcode search tool on our website. When voters enter their postcode they are shown where their polling station is, and who their candidates are. You could embed this tool on your own website, using the widget, or add a link to our website. To facilitate this, we need you to send the polling station data for your area to Democracy Club. Once you have finalised your polling stations ahead of the election you can export the data from your EMS and email it to pollingstations@democracyclub.org.uk . Detailed instructions are available for each supplier , if you need them. We also provide your contact details in our postcode search tool. If your contact details change, we ask that you let us know as soon as possible so that we can update our records. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Providing information to electors on polling station locations Production and publication of notices Providing information to political parties, candidates and agents Providing information to political parties, candidates and agents Briefings You should ensure that you offer all potential candidates and agents a briefing session before or at the start of the nomination period. You should also hold an additional briefing session after the list of candidates standing for election has been confirmed after the close of nominations. As a minimum, your briefing should cover: the nomination process the election process election spending accessing the electoral register equipment provided to polling station that makes voting easier for disabled people You will also need to decide how information about local arrangements will be provided. This will include information on the dates, times and venues for the key election processes including: postal vote issues and openings polling day the verification and count The briefings should allow for the fact that there may be people who have little or no knowledge of election rules and procedures or who have not involved themselves in elections for some time. All briefing sessions should highlight the importance of following the election rules. You should also provide information on the standards of behaviour you expect from supporters in the area of the polling place on polling day. We have produced a template presentation for candidates and agents, which you may want to use as a basis for briefing candidates and agents in your area. Briefing for candidates and agents - UK Parliamentary election (PPTX) Providing written information You should ensure that candidates and election agents are also issued with written guidance on the election process and that the information is provided in good time to enable candidates and agents to act on it. The purpose of providing written guidance is so that parties, candidates and agents have access to authoritative and comprehensive guidance for reference at any time to ensure that they have all the information they need to take part in an election. Where appropriate, you can provide candidates and agents with a link to where they can find the relevant information online and it will be for you to ensure that candidates can easily access the information they need and to do whatever is necessary to facilitate this. You should ensure that candidates and agents can

easily access all the information they need in order to be able to participate in the election. You should bear in mind that candidates and agents may have specific access needs, and so may need any information or guidance produced in a large-print or other format, such as Braille or audio, or in a language other than (or, in Wales, in a language other than or Welsh). You should also consider that candidates and agents may have special requirements to support their attendance at briefings and you should make briefings available online or via video conference wherever possible. You can record your briefing and make this available online for candidates and agents to watch on demand at their convenience, with details of how they can ask any follow up questions afterwards included. However, you will also need to consider how you will offer briefings to those who are unable to, or uncomfortable with, accessing such information online, which may require you to provide some in-person briefings. You should inform candidates and agents of your proposed approach early to assist with your planning and preparation. Those interested in receiving a briefing should be asked to register in advance so that you can track numbers as well as accessibility requirements, which will enable you to tailor your approach and put the appropriate arrangements in place. Last updated: 27 September 2023

[Book traversal links for Providing information to political parties, candidates and agents](#)
[Providing information to electors on polling station locations](#)
[Providing information on the nomination process](#)
[Providing information on the nomination process As \(Acting\) Returning Officer](#)

you are responsible for all aspects of the nomination process at a UK Parliamentary election. 1 It is important to raise awareness of the availability of information for those wishing to stand for election through the provision of briefings and online or printed guidance, especially for those who have not made direct contact with you or your staff. When providing information or briefing sessions about the nomination process you should ensure you include information on: relevant deadlines submission rules subscriber requirements and use of the electoral register the use of commonly used names the completion of nomination papers the use of party names, descriptions and emblems the methods for paying the deposit any informal checking process arrangements you have in place Questions of eligibility or disqualification are for the candidate only and you should not give advice on such matters. The candidate should be directed to our guidance for candidates and agents in the first instance. Should they have any further concerns, you should advise them to seek their own legal advice.

Nomination packs You should prepare a nomination pack for any person who expresses an interest in standing for election. The nomination pack should contain: a nomination form a home address form a consent to nomination form a form for candidates to give notice of appointment of an election agent forms for candidates or their election agent to give notice of appointment of polling agents, postal voting agents and counting agents a certificate of authorisation to allow a candidate to stand on behalf of a registered political party a form for the candidate of a political party to request the use of an emblem details of how the deposit should be paid, including information on acceptable methods of payment written guidance for candidates and agents covering key aspects of the electoral process, including the qualifications and disqualifications for election, the nominations process, campaigning dos and don'ts, accessing electoral proceedings and what happens after the declaration of the result details of any local arrangements, such as the arrangements for the opening of postal votes, the poll and the count a copy of the Code of conduct for campaigners in Great Britain which sets out what is, and is not, considered acceptable behaviour at polling stations and in the community details of how to obtain a copy of the electoral register and the absent voters'

lists, forms to make such requests with information on where to send these request forms to. You should highlight that the information contained in the electoral register and absent voting lists may only be used in accordance with the Representation of the People regulations 2001 and in accordance with data protection legislation. the relevant electorate figures to enable calculation of spending limits any other relevant information Our guidance for candidates and agents at a UK Parliamentary general election can be found on our website at: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/uk-parliamentary-general-election-great-britain> Our guidance for candidates and agents at a UK Parliamentary by-election can be found on our website at: <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/candidate-or-agent/uk-parliamentary-by-elections-great-britain> We have also produced a set of nomination papers that you can include in your nomination packs, which contains the required nomination papers as well as a certificate of authorisation, an emblem request form and an election agent appointment notification form. Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election (DOC) 1. Rules 5 to 17, Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Providing information on the nomination process Providing information to political parties, candidates and agents Providing information on accessing the electoral register Providing information on accessing the electoral register Candidates are entitled on written request to the ERO to a free copy of the full register for the electoral area in which they are standing 1 . While the legal responsibility for receiving and supplying registers to candidates rests with the ERO for each local authority area, if you are the (A)RO of a constituency which crosses local authority boundaries, you should have in place plans for managing or coordinating requests and supplying copies of the registers to candidates. These plans should ensure that all candidates can be supplied with registers in such a way that they have timely and easy access to them. For example, you may consider supplying the registers to UK Parliamentary candidates centrally on behalf of all the EROs, and include a request form in the nomination pack that covers all local authority areas that are part of the constituency. The benefit of this approach is that it could operate so that candidates or election agents only need to complete one request form covering all local authority areas and receive their registers from a single place, instead of having to approach each ERO separately with individual requests. You would need to also consider the practicalities of collating the registers and, in particular, the updates to the register. You would need to discuss and agree with the EROs how the various registers and updates to them could be brought together for subsequent timely supply, including how this would work for both printed and data copies. The registers must be supplied in data form unless a printed copy has been specifically requested. We have produced template electoral register and absent voter list request forms that candidates can use. Register request form (DOC) Absent voters' list request form (DOC) Further information about candidate's entitlement to the register and absent votes list can be found in part 4 of our guidance for candidates and agents 1. Regulations 102 and 108, Representation of the People Regulations 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Providing information on accessing the electoral register Providing information on the nomination process Providing information on key election processes Providing information on key election processes As part of your plans for engaging with candidates and agents and supporting their participation in the election, you will need to determine how information about local arrangements will be provided to candidates. Local arrangements will include

information on the dates, times and venues for the key election processes, including: postal vote issue and openings polling day equipment provided to polling stations to make voting easier for disabled voters the verification and count As well as communicating your local arrangements, you should provide candidates and agents information on the requirement to show photographic ID at the polling station before a ballot paper is issued: accepted forms of photographic ID how electors who do not have an accepted form of photographic ID can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate or an Anonymous Elector's Document the polling station process in respect of the identification requirement Your briefing session(s) should also highlight any security arrangements that you have put in place in consultation with the police. You may wish to invite your police single point of contact (SPOC) to attend any briefing sessions, or to provide written material that you can provide to candidates and agents. You should also cover what standards of behaviour you expect from supporters in the area of the polling place on polling day. The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice have produced guidance on Maintaining order and preventing undue influence outside polling stations . This document is designed to help the police think about how best to approach the issue of policing polling stations and offers some practical steps to help them reduce the likelihood of problems arising and deal with any that occur. Although it is aimed at the SPOC it may also be of use to you, particularly in communicating to candidates and agents the standards of behaviour expected from supporters in the area of the polling place. It should be read in conjunction with section 3 of the code of conduct for campaigners: electoral registration, postal voting, proxy voting and polling stations. Code of conduct for campaigners - reserved elections in GB from January 2023 Tellers guidance Tellers do's and don't Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Providing information on key election processes Providing information on accessing the electoral register Providing information on election spending Providing information on election spending Candidates are required by law to follow certain rules regarding: • how much they can spend • who they can accept donations from • what they must report after the election You should ensure that candidates and election agents have access to information on calculating the spending limit 1 (including the electorate figure and whether the constituency is a county or borough constituency), spending returns and declarations in order to enable them to meet reporting requirements. Further information on the two types of constituency can be found here . At a general election, candidates will need the total number of electors on the UK Parliamentary register for the constituency on the last day for the publication of the notice of election (i.e. on the second day after the writ is received) excluding any attainers who will not be 18 years old on or before polling day. If you are not also the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) or your constituency crosses local authority boundaries, you should liaise with the relevant ERO(s) so that you are able to provide candidates with an accurate electorate figure that will allow them to calculate their spending limits. It is important that candidates are provided with the correct electorate figures so that they know how much they can spend. We have produced guidance on spending and donations at UK Parliamentary general elections which can be found in Part 3 of our guidance for candidates and agents . Our template presentation for candidates and agents also contains guidance on spending and donations. You can use these resources to provide candidates and agents with information on spending returns and declarations in order to enable them to meet their reporting requirements. Briefing for candidates and agents - UK Parliamentary election (PPTX) UK Parliamentary By-Elections UK

Parliamentary By-Elections For by-elections, the slides on spending will need to be amended to reflect the different regulated period and spending limits that apply to by-elections. The spending limit for candidates during the regulated period at a UK Parliamentary by-election is £100,000 . The regulated period begins on the day after the date the candidate officially becomes a candidate and ends on the date of the poll. A person officially becomes a candidate at a UK Parliamentary by-election at the time the vacancy occurred if on or before this date they have already declared that they are intending to be a candidate at the election (or another person has declared that the person is intending to be a candidate). 2 If after this date they or others declare that they will be a candidate at the election, they will become a candidate on the date such a declaration is made, or on the date that they submit their nomination papers, whichever is the earlier. For further information, see also our guidance for candidates and agents at UK Parliamentary by-elections . 1. Section 76(2)(b) Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.118A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 27 September 2023

Book traversal links for Providing information on election spending Providing information on key election processes Working with the media Working with the media The media plays an important role in providing information to voters on the election and it is important for your communications with media outlets and representatives to be well-planned and managed in order to maintain public confidence that the election is being well-run. To achieve this effectively, there should be a clear process in place for communications relating to the poll in each constituency to be followed by you and, in the case of cross-boundary constituencies, the relevant staff at the other authority, and your respective communications team(s) to respond to any issues that arise. Your arrangements for working with the media should include: processes for dealing with general media enquiries strategies for dealing with both proactive communication and media liaison in relation to specific events such as the counting of votes and result declaration plans for reactive handling of any issues that arise in relation to the election, for example allegations of electoral fraud Media attendance at the count When developing your plan for how you will support media attendance at the count you should consider: contacting principal broadcast organisations in advance and outlining the press facilities available providing an opportunity for media representatives to inspect the verification and count venue to see what space and facilities are available, to give them the opportunity to raise any issues or technical requirements with you so you can incorporate these into your planning for venue layout discussing arrangements for the declaration of results arranging for sound systems to be used for the announcements and for any live feeds making accreditation arrangements for journalists, technicians and photographers attending and providing media passes ensuring that there is a nominated media spokesperson in place for the count, and that everyone is aware who this is and that all media questions should be directed to that person making sure that the media are aware of any restricted areas and procedures e.g. that camera operators are aware they must not overstep sensitive information (such as close-ups of ballot papers) or obstruct count staff ensuring that the council's public relations team are present to deal with media enquiries. You should make sure that they know who to approach if they are asked any technical electoral questions explaining the processes to be followed and the expected finish and declaration times for each poll putting steps in place to enable you to provide media representatives with a written copy of the results at the time the announcement is made In order to assist you and your communications team further with media liaison at the count, we have developed some

tips for managing the media at the count tips for managing the media at the count.
Tips on managing the media at the count (DOC) Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book
traversal links for Working with the media Providing information on election spending
Accredited Observers and Commission representatives Accredited Observers and
Commission representatives Observers accredited by the Commission are entitled to
observe: the issue and receipt of postal ballot papers the poll the verification and
counting of the votes 1 Your project plan should include processes to manage
potential enquiries from observers and to support their attendance at the electoral
processes they are entitled to attend. This should include providing observers with
information on the location and timing of the above processes. Commission
representatives are also entitled to observe these processes and, in addition, are
entitled to observe your working practices. 2 Accredited observers and Commission
representatives do not need to give advance notification of where they intend to
observe, but will carry with them a photographic identification card issued by the
Commission. Quick guide to the observer badge types Observer badge type Who are they?
Access Electoral Commission representatives Same as candidates and agents, plus
access to the issue of postal votes, and working practices of the (A)RO and ERO
Observers accredited by the Commission Same as candidates and agents, plus access to
the issue of postal votes If you are in doubt about the status of a particular
individual seeking to gain access to election processes, you can check the registers
of observers on the Commission's website . You have a legal duty to have regard to
the Commission's Code of practice for observers when managing the attendance of
observers. 3 Observers will have agreed to comply with the standards of behaviour set
out in the Commission's Code of practice. If you think there has been a breach of the
Code of practice, please inform your local Commission team . Observers at UK
elections booklet 1. Section 6C(1) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act
2000 (PPERA 2000) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S. 6A(1) and 6B(1) PERA 2000 ■
Back to content at footnote 2 3. S. 6F(7) and 6E(4)(b) PERA 2000 ■ Back to content
at footnote 3 Last updated: 30 March 2023 Book traversal links for Accredited
Observers and Commission representatives Working with the media Resources for
(Acting) Returning Officers - Planning for the election Resources for (Acting)
Returning Officers - Planning for the election Absent voters' list request form (DOC)
Ballot paper account exercise (DOC) Briefing for candidates and agents - UK
Parliamentary election (PPTX) Checklist for polling station inspectors (DOCX) Close
of poll packing instructions (DOCX) Code of conduct for campaigners - reserved
elections in GB from January 2023 FAQs for frontline staff - UK Parliamentary
election - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the
Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed.
Forensic Science Service guidance UKPGE Election timetable generic (DOCX) UKPE By
election timetable generic (DOCX) 2017 Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral
fraud in Scotland Making your mark - design guidance for EAs Nomination pack - UK
Parliamentary general election (DOC) Observers at UK elections booklet - We are
updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022.
It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Polling station
handbook - UK Parliamentary election - We are updating this resource to reflect new
measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the
updates have been completed. Polling station quick guide - UK Parliamentary election
- We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections
Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Polling
station staff briefing - UK Parliamentary election (PPTX) Polling station scenarios

for polling station staff - UKPGE (DOCX) Polling station quiz - UKPGE (DOCX) Project plan UKPGE EA (docx) Register request form (DOC) Risk register Secrecy requirements - the poll (DOC) Tips on managing the media at the count (DOC) Last updated: 28 September 2023 Book traversal links for Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Planning for the election Accredited Observers and Commission representatives Voter Materials Voter Materials Voter Materials It is vital to the delivery of the election that voters can receive the information they need, without errors, in an accessible format and within time for them to take necessary action in relation to their vote. This guidance provides an overview of the legal requirements relating to poll cards, postal vote stationery and ballot papers, and of the areas where you have discretion regarding design and the information to be included on these materials. It also includes information to help you quality-assure the process of producing voter materials, including guidance on proof-checking and on working with suppliers and contractors. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Voter Materials Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Planning for the election Production of poll cards Production of poll cards Poll cards must follow the prescribed form in legislation. You must include on each poll card all of the elements specified in the relevant election rules and shown on the front and the back of the poll cards in the appendix to the Representation of the People Regulations 2001 (as amended). 1 You should liaise with your Royal Mail contact (or other commercial delivery partner) at an early stage to ensure that you have appropriate licences in place and that the poll card meets specific delivery requirements. Poll cards should be sent to electors and their proxies as soon as practicable after the publication of notice of election. If you are outsourcing the production of poll cards you will need to dispatch your poll card data to your printers and you should ensure that your software is able to produce a data file that your printers can use to produce the materials to the specification required. You should, at an early stage in discussions with your printers, have addressed in what format you will supply the data and in what format they will send you any proofs, and this should be included in your specification and contract. Further information can be found in our guidance on developing contracts for outsourced work and quality assurance checks . Subsequent issues of poll cards EROs must publish two interim election notices of alteration before publishing the final election notice of alteration on the fifth working day before the poll. These notices support the prompt dispatch of poll cards to those electors who have applied to register close to the registration deadline. 2 The first interim notice of alteration must be published on the last day for delivery of nomination papers, which is 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll. 3 If you are not also the ERO, you should liaise with them to ensure that the timing of the publication of the second interim notice can support the production of your second wave of poll cards. The second interim notice must be published between the day after the deadline for delivery of nomination papers and the sixth working day before the poll. 4 An update of the registration data resulting from each of the notices of alteration should be sent to your printers as soon as practicable to enable the production of poll cards for new electors. Further information on interim notices can be found in our Electoral Registration Officer guidance for England , Scotland or Wales . You can also find further guidance on poll card delivery . Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, you will need to work with other local authorities to ensure you are able to provide the data from the other authority/authorities to the printers. You should also liaise with them to

obtain the information on new electors as soon as possible after the publication of the interim notices of alteration and the final election notice of alteration. 1. Schedule 3 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 & Schedule 3 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001. The latest versions of the poll cards at UK Parliamentary elections can be found in The Representation of the People (England and Wales) (Description of Electoral Registers and Amendment) Regulations 2013 and, in Wales, should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015. ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. s13AB and s13B Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. s13AB(5) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. s13AB(6) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 12 September 2023

Book traversal links for Production of poll cards Voter Materials Production of postal voting stationery Production of postal voting stationery As part of your planning, you will have decided whether the production of postal voting stationery and the issuing of postal votes will be carried out in-house or outsourced. Further guidance to support your decision-making on outsourcing can be found in our guidance on managing contractors and suppliers . Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries you will need to establish whether your software system is able to correctly read the data provided by the other authority/authorities. You will also need to ensure you are able to get the data to printers for the production of the postal voting stationery. You will need to liaise with the other authority/authorities at the earliest opportunity. Contents of postal ballot pack Contents of postal ballot pack You must send a postal ballot pack to all eligible postal voters. 1 Postal ballot packs must include: 2 an outgoing envelope return envelopes: envelope 'A' (the ballot paper envelope) and envelope 'B' (the covering envelope for the return of envelope 'A' and the postal voting statement) a ballot paper a postal voting statement In addition you must issue instructional information ensuring that those entitled to vote by post are able to obtain: 3 translations into other languages of any directions to or guidance for voters sent with the ballot paper a translation into Braille of such directions or guidance a graphical representation of such directions or guidance the directions or guidance in any other form (including any audible form) 1. Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983), s24(1) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Representation of the People (England & Wales) Regulations 2001 reg 74, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 reg 74 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. RPA 1983 s24(2) ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Production of postal voting stationery Production of poll cards Postal ballot pack envelopes Postal ballot pack envelopes You must address the outgoing envelope to the elector at the address they have asked for their ballot paper to be sent to and which is shown in the postal voters' list or the postal proxy voters' list. 1 To preserve the secrecy of the ballot, you must provide two separate envelopes provided for returning the ballot paper and the postal voting statement: 2 Envelope 'A' – this is the envelope for the return of the ballot paper, which is to be marked with the letter 'A', the words 'ballot paper envelope' and the number of the ballot paper. Envelope 'B' – this is the covering envelope for the return of the ballot paper envelope (envelope 'A') and the postal voting statement. It is to be marked with the letter 'B' and your address. You should print the name of your constituency on all 'A' and 'B' envelopes. This will help to reduce instances of postal votes becoming undeliverable if, for example, a voter returns the 'A' envelope with both the ballot

paper and postal voting statement inside it, without putting it in the 'B' envelope. Envelopes for anonymous electors Whenever you communicate with an anonymous elector you are required to send the communication in an envelope or other form of covering in such a way that does not disclose to any other person that the voter has an anonymous entry. You should therefore send postal ballot packs to anonymously registered electors in a plain outgoing envelope. 3 The envelope should include their name and correspondence address, but must not include their elector number or make any reference to the election or electoral register. Postage costs Unless you are delivering postal votes by hand, you are required to pre-pay postage on the outgoing envelope addressed to the postal voter. You are also required to pre-pay postage on all return envelopes, except where postal votes have been sent to an address outside of the UK. 4 You should, however, explore with Royal Mail and the printer what you can do to facilitate the timely return of completed postal ballot packs from outside the UK, including the potential for the inclusion of appropriate pre-paid postage for items being returned from overseas. You could decide to use a different design of envelope for postal votes being sent to an address which is outside the UK. For example you could add a different colour flash. This may facilitate more efficient sorting, identification and prioritisation of overseas postal votes. 1.

Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR (E&W) 2001) reg 72(7), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (S) 2001) reg 72(7) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 74, RPR(S) 2001 reg 74 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 72(8), RPR(S) 2001 reg 72(8) ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 76, RPR(S) 2001 reg 76 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Postal

ballot pack envelopes Production of postal voting stationery Postal ballot paper, postal voting statement, and additional instructions for voters Postal ballot paper, postal voting statement, and additional instructions to voters Postal ballot paper The form of the ballot paper is prescribed in legislation and you have a legal duty to follow this precisely. 1 Further information can be found in our guidance on the printing of ballot papers . Postal voting statement The postal voting statement is set out in the legislation and must be produced in the prescribed form. 2 The postal voting statement must include: the voter's name (unless they are an anonymous elector) the number of the ballot paper being issued with the statement a unique identifying mark, which could be a barcode but could also be in another format - this mark does not have to be connected to the unique identifying mark on the ballot paper; it may be the same but equally it could be different or connected the prescribed instructions to the voter on how to vote by post The postal voting statement also contains space for a barcode. You must produce different forms of the postal voting statement for anonymous electors and for those who have been granted a waiver. The postal voting statement for anonymous electors must not show the name of the elector. Where an elector has been granted a waiver by the ERO, you are required by legislation to omit the signature box and any reference to signing the form in the instructions to voters. You should also design and test the postal vote statements to ensure that the signature and date of birth fields are in the correct place and format to be able to be processed on their return by your personal identifier verification system. Additional instructions to voters In addition to the prescribed content of the postal ballot pack as above, you should provide additional, more specific instructions - for example, graphical instructions for voters to help them complete the statement and ballot paper and return their postal vote stationery in the correct envelopes. You should include the information that you must provide to

postal voters on how to obtain instructions in alternative formats e.g. alternative languages, braille, and audio. As part of these instructions, you should also include information explaining the personal nature of the vote, setting out that it is secret and that anyone interfering with the voter marking their vote would be committing an offence. As well as information on how to report any concerns or suspected instances of electoral fraud.

1. Representation of the People Act 1983 sch 1 rule 19. The latest version of the UK Parliamentary ballot paper can be found in The Representation of the People (Ballot Paper) Regulations 2015 and in Wales should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015. ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 reg 66, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 reg 66. The latest version of the postal voting statement at UK Parliamentary elections can be found in The Representation of the People (England and Wales) (Description of Electoral Registers and Amendment) Regulations 2013 and, in Wales, should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015. ■ Back to content at footnote 2

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Postal ballot paper, postal voting statement, and additional instructions for voters

Postal ballot pack envelopes

Production of ballot papers

Production of ballot papers

You have a legal duty to follow precisely the design and print specifications of ballot papers prescribed in legislation. By law, ballot papers for postal voters and for polling station use must be the same in design and size, except that the official mark may be different if desire.

1 You should ensure that you check with your print supplier at an early stage to establish the maximum size of ballot paper that they can print and, if necessary, have contingency arrangements in place in the event that a larger ballot paper is required.

2 The final content of the ballot paper cannot be confirmed until nominations have closed, but you will need to make decisions about the following elements of the ballot paper specification at an early stage: the format of the ballot paper numbers the form of the reverse of the ballot paper the unique identifying mark the design of the 'official mark' what colour the ballot papers will be

1. Representation of the People Act 1983 sch 1 rule 19. The latest version of the UK Parliamentary ballot paper can be found in The Representation of the People (Ballot Paper) Regulations 2015 and in Wales should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015. ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. RPA 1983 sch 1 appendix of forms. The latest version of the UK Parliamentary ballot paper can be found in The Representation of the People (Ballot Paper) Regulations 2015 and in Wales should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Production of ballot papers

Postal ballot paper, postal voting statement, and additional instructions for voters

Print quantities

Print quantities

In your early discussions with your print supplier you must carefully consider the number of ballot papers that will need to be printed to allow you to allocate a sufficient number of ballot papers to polling stations and issue postal ballot packs. This will also enable sufficient paper stocks to be procured. You should base your print-run on 100% turnout of eligible electors. There are significant risks attached to printing ballot papers based on lower turnout levels. For example, if you start running out of ballot papers on polling day it will be more difficult at that stage to print additional ballot papers and send these to the affected polling stations in a timely manner. If you decide for any reason not to print ballot papers based on 100% turnout of eligible electorate, you should carefully assess the risks. As part of your risk assessment you should consider:

turnout projections for the poll, taking into account the potential for late engagement and interest - the last equivalent poll should be used as the minimum expected turnout the particular context of the poll any local or national issues which may affect turnout whether having a stock of additional ballot papers ready for rapid delivery to polling stations is preferable, for example printing a minimum of 100% of ballot papers but not issuing 100% of printed ballot papers to polling stations You should also take steps to ensure that additional ballot papers can be printed at short notice if required and decide how polling station staff would be briefed should this situation occur. Guidance on the allocation of ballot papers to polling stations can be found in our guidance on polling station voting. Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Print quantities Production of ballot papers Ballot paper design Ballot paper design Ballot paper numbers Ballot paper numbers should run consecutively, but do not have to start at '1'. Ballot paper numbers should be unique, and should not be reused, for example the polling station, postal vote and tendered ballot papers should all be numbered differently. Form of the reverse of the ballot paper The form of the reverse of the ballot paper is prescribed and you must ensure that the required information is included on the ballot paper reverse in the specified format. 1 There is no provision to put any hatching or other marks on the back of the ballot paper. Unique identifying mark (UIM) The unique identifying mark can be made up of letters and numbers and could be a repeat of the ballot paper number with the addition of a prefix or a suffix. The unique identifying mark can instead be, but does not have to be, a barcode. It is important to remember that the unique identifying mark is not the same as the official mark. The unique identifying mark: 2 should be unique for each ballot paper can be re-used at the next poll must be printed on the back of the ballot paper The official mark The official mark is a security mark that must be added to the ballot paper. The official mark: 3 can be the same for all ballot papers at an election or different official marks can be used for different purposes at the same election, for example one for postal votes and another for polling station ballot papers cannot be re-used for seven years at a UK Parliamentary election to the same constituency The mark should be distinctive. It could be a printed emblem or mark or a special printing device such as a watermark. It could also be a perforation added at the time of issue of the ballot paper if stamping instruments are used to create a perforating official mark. The mark should be capable of being seen on the front of the ballot paper without having to turn the ballot paper over. 4 Ballot paper colour The colour of ballot papers is not prescribed and is for you to determine. Tendered ballot papers are required by law to be a different colour from the ordinary ballot papers. 5 In deciding on the ballot paper colour you should take into account accessibility issues relating to colour and contrast. See our ' Making your mark ' good practice design guidance for more information on choosing ballot paper colours. Cross-boundary constituencies and combinations Cross-boundary constituencies and combinations You should decide at an early stage in the planning process and in consultation with the local government RO(s) in your constituency, what colour the UK Parliamentary ballot paper will be in your constituency. You should liaise with the other RO(s) in your constituency to ensure that in the event of a combined election the ballot paper colours are different for each election. 1. Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) sch 1 appendix of forms. The latest version of the UK Parliamentary ballot paper can be found in The Representation of the People (Ballot Paper) Regulations 2015 and in Wales should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015. ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPA 1983 sch 1 rule 19 ■

Back to content at footnote 2 3. RPA 1983 sch 1 rule 20 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. RPA 1983 sch 1 rule 20 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. RPA 1983 sch 1 rule 40(2) ■ Back to content at footnote 5 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Ballot paper design Print quantities Candidate details Candidate details Candidate name Candidates must appear on the ballot paper as listed as in the statement of persons nominated . Their names and relevant details must appear according to the directions for printing. 1 Candidate surnames must appear in capital letters, including the capitalisation of surnames beginning with MAC or MC and the names should follow strict alphabetisation e.g. MABBOT, MACLEAN, MATTHEWS, MCCORMICK, MORRISON. Where a candidate has listed multiple names as their surname, either hyphenated or not, you should reproduce the whole name as provided. For example Dick Van Dyke would appear as VAN DYKE, Dick on the ballot paper and for alphabetisation purposes their surname would start with a V. Similarly, Ann Smith-Jones would be SMITH-JONES, Ann on the ballot paper and would be listed as an S for alphabetisation purposes. In all cases, you should use the maximum possible sizes of font. To ensure consistency, the same font size should be used for each candidate on each equivalent line. Emblems If the candidate is standing for a registered political party and has requested the use of an emblem, you may be provided with a high-resolution copy of the emblem for use in the printing of ballot papers. Alternatively you may need to download the emblem from our website . You should ensure that whatever copy is used is in the same form as the registered emblem. The maximum size of an emblem on the ballot paper is two centimetres square. 2 Do not alter or distort the shape of the emblem to fit the ballot paper. You should ensure that the emblem is in the same form as the registered emblem – for example, do not stretch emblems into square shapes if they are not registered as square images on our website, as this would have the effect of altering their appearance. 1. Representation of the People Act 1983 sch 1 rule 19(1). The latest version of the UK Parliamentary ballot paper can be found in The Representation of the People (Ballot Paper) Regulations 2015 and in Wales should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015. ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Directions as to Printing the Ballot Paper. Appendix of forms to Representation of the People Act 1983 sch 1. The latest version of the UK Parliamentary ballot paper can be found in The Representation of the People (Ballot Paper) Regulations 2015 and in Wales should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015. ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Candidate details Ballot paper design Quality assurance and proof checking of election materials Quality assurance and proofing of election materials It is vital that you undertake careful and thorough checks of all draft proofs of your election materials before they are signed off and ready to be printed and dispatched. This is often a very time-consuming and time-critical stage of the process as your suppliers will be working to tight timetables and will likely give you hard deadlines. You should decide who from your team will be involved in the checking of proofs and the quality assurance of the production process. It is possible that you will need a number of team members to play a role, and it may be helpful to involve others not as close to the raw candidate information or base proofs to ensure that nothing has been missed. Where possible, it is helpful to ensure that more than one person checks each set of proofs before approving them to ensure that errors are spotted. This can be especially helpful in mitigating the risk of errors being made when turning around a large number of proofs in a short timeframe. You can carry out checks in person by attending the premises of your supplier and accessing your printed material directly, though some suppliers may

offer to conduct these checks for you as part of their service instead. Where you are using suppliers to conduct checks, you must ensure that you get a detailed breakdown of what print quality checks are being undertaken. These should include: checking that the printed material is accurate by checking against a specimen copy of the final signed off live proof for each version of the material where necessary, checking that all personalised text has been printed correctly Alternatively, you may have materials sent to you for checking before they are despatched from your premises. You should produce guidance notes for those members of staff checking election materials. Checking base text You should ensure that you check the base text of all material carefully; this is the text that will not change, regardless of contest, number or details of candidates, or elector information. For efficiency, some suppliers may produce your proofs from templates used for previous polls. Do not presume that the information output by your electoral software management system will automatically be correct. For example, there may have been legislative or boundary changes, or changes to your contact information. It is your responsibility to check that all the information is accurate and also that the election materials comply with all legislative requirements. Checking live proofs You should have in place a process for checking live proofs of all forms of election material at the print stage to check that there are no errors and that they are being printed to the required specification. This should include items that have smaller print runs too, such as tendered ballot papers, postal proxies or additional postal vote print runs to include those who applied after the initial data files were provided. You need to decide how many items will be checked for each item/print-run/fill. As a minimum, for print checks, at least the first and last item for each version of the item should be checked to ensure that the print runs start and end as expected. Carrying out checks at the live proof stage will allow staff to check that the print run reflects the latest approved version of the item which will highlight if any of the signed-off proofs have been inadvertently altered, that there is no bleeding of ink and that the print quality is good and consistent. You are likely to have many different sets of proofs for the same item, so you should be checking that the variable text on each set of proofs has been correctly included. It is helpful to have a spreadsheet of all the variable text per version ready for checking against. This could include, for example, a sheet containing: a list of all of your contested elections the number of vacancies per election candidate names, descriptions and emblems It is important to pay particular attention to emblems as many may look similar at first glance. You should proof any spreadsheets to be used for quality assurance purposes against original data, such as nomination papers. You should keep a record of stationery that has been checked to provide a clear audit trail of the processes that have been undertaken and which you can refer back to should any issues subsequently arise. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Quality assurance and proof checking of election materials Candidate details Tips for proof checking Tips for proof checking When producing guidance to support your staff with proof checking election materials particular attention should be paid to checking that: every detail on all printing materials is spelt correctly electors' names and addresses are accurate and match those on the electoral register / absent voting lists materials being sent to electors are the correct ones for them (e.g. the ballot paper is the correct one for their electoral area; postal proxies are being sent postal proxy poll cards) where relevant, the correct deadlines appear (for example, for postal/proxy applications on poll cards) where a form is prescribed, that it meets the prescribed requirements For the ballot paper, you should also check that: the directions for printing have been

followed precisely the official mark and unique identifying mark are correctly printed the ballot paper includes the details of all validly nominated candidates for that particular electoral area; as part of this you should check that: all candidate names (or commonly used name(s) where relevant) are correct where relevant, party names, descriptions and emblems are correct and as registered on the Commission's register of political parties the instructions at the top of each ballot paper are the correct ones for the electoral area For the postal voting statement, you should also check that: the correct ballot paper numbers are printed the correct voting instructions for the electoral area are included Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Tips for proof checking Quality assurance and proof checking of election materials Post production quality assurance checks Post production quality assurance checks Once your election materials have been produced, you need to ensure that all materials have been printed, collated and prepared for despatch to electors or for use at polling stations without errors. Checking filled postal vote packs before despatch When carrying out quality assurance checks of filled postal ballot packs this should include checking: that ballot paper and PVS numbers align personalised name/address information appears as expected in windows that each pack contains the correct items - for example check that the correct ballot papers and reply envelope have been included You should carry out random spot checks across all packs to ensure a representative cross-section has been checked with at least two packs from each batch of 250 packs (which is roughly the equivalent of a full Royal Mail postal 'tray'). You should also ensure that there are specific checks of any fills that include additional items, such as where a by-election means an additional ballot paper is being included. You should make sure that you keep a clear audit trail of the proofing and other quality assurance processes that have been undertaken either by your staff or by your supplier which you can refer back to should any issues subsequently arise. You can find more guidance to support you in this process in Quality assurance and proof checking of election materials and further guidance on quality assuring the issuing process is available in our section on absent voting. Checking ballot paper books before allocation When you receive the printed ballot paper books, you should carry out a final check before any ballot papers are supplied to a polling station. When carrying out final quality assurance checks of the printed ballot paper books, you should check that: the first and last ballot paper in every book and by checking that the ballot paper numbers in each book or packet run sequentially every detail on the ballot paper is spelt correctly every emblem that has been validly requested has been included beside the correct candidate and matches the party's entry in the Commission's register all candidate descriptions have been printed in the line for the correct candidate the voting instructions at the top of the ballot paper match the legislative requirements the ballot papers have been cut to the correct size the official mark has been included You can find guidance on the allocation of ballot papers to polling stations in our section on polling station voting. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Post production quality assurance checks Tips for proof checking Ballot paper security Ballot paper security You must ensure the security of ballot papers during production, delivery and storage. Once the official mark is printed on your ballot papers, they are effectively 'live'. Regardless of whether you have outsourced your printing or are printing in-house, in order to ensure that voters can have confidence in the process, your security arrangements should prevent unauthorised access to or use of the ballot papers. These restrictions should apply during all stages of the production process and storage between printing and the poll. You can find further information in our

guidance on planning for ballot paper security. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Ballot paper security Post production quality assurance checks Starting the election timetable Starting the election timetable This section of the guidance covers the statutory actions that must take place to enable the election timetable to formally commence. This includes: the process for the issue and receipt of the writ the subsequent publication of the notice of election the requirement to deliver poll cards as soon as is practicable after the notice of election is published Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Starting the election timetable Ballot paper security The issue and receipt of the writ The issue and receipt of the writ A writ requiring the UK Parliamentary election to be run in your constituency will be issued after the dissolution of the UK Parliament. The writ will be delivered to the RO unless they have appointed you (the (A)RO) or someone else as their deputy. The writ will be sent to the RO by title, rather than by name. 1 The Clerk of the Crown maintains a list of ROs to whom the writ will be sent. If you, as (A)RO, have been appointed by the RO to receive the writ, the RO must give notice to the Clerk of the Crown on a prescribed form . 2 The writ will usually be delivered by Royal Mail and once it has been issued, your local Royal Mail contact will usually contact the RO or (A)RO to make an appointment for the delivery. It is essential that any changes to the address of the person who will receive the writ are notified to the Clerk of the Crown and the Royal Mail immediately. Regardless of who receives the writ, a receipt provided by Royal Mail must be completed. This gives the date on which it is received and the name of the officer accepting it. Copies should be taken of the writ and the original kept secure. 3 The writ is taken to have been received the day after dissolution of Parliament. 4 This allows you to begin making arrangements the day after the election writs are issued, even in the event that the physical delivery of the writ is delayed. The date the writ is taken to have been received affects the UK Parliamentary election timetable. The notice of election must be published no later than 4pm on the second day following the date the writ is taken to have been received. 5 The period for delivery of nomination papers will begin from the day after the publication of notice of election. UK Parliamentary by-elections UK Parliamentary by-elections The writ is taken to have been received the day after the issue of the warrant for the writ triggering the by-election timetable, but this timetable is more flexible than the timetable at a general election. This is because at a by-election, the (Acting) Returning Officer has some discretion over the length of the nomination period, which also impacts on polling day. The process for receiving the writ is the same at a UK Parliamentary by-election as it is for a general election. However, the timing of the issue of the writ for a by-election is dependent on when a motion is moved in the House of Commons for the issue of the writ. A writ may also be issued in certain circumstances during Parliamentary recess. You must fix the date of the poll and the length of the nomination period. The deadline for the receipt of nomination papers cannot be earlier than the third working day after the date of publication of the notice of election and not later than the seventh working day after the writ is received. 6 You should seek to maximise the length of time that candidates have to submit their nomination papers within the limits set by the timetable Polling day must not be earlier than the 17th and not later than the 19th working day after the last day for delivery of nomination papers. If you have a by-election, you should contact your local Commission team who will be able to assist you by checking the election timetable. The issue and receipt of the writ We have produced a timetable with all of the relevant deadlines for a UK Parliamentary election, as well as a separate template timetable for a UK

Parliamentary by-election. UKPGE Election timetable generic (DOCX) UKPE By election timetable generic (DOCX) Information about endorsing and returning the writ after the declaration of the result can be found in our guidance on Providing notice of the result . 1. Sections 27 and 28 Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 4 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rule 3 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Section 28 (3A) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Schedule 1 Rule 1 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 6. Schedule 1 Rule 1 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 6 Last updated: 12 September 2023 Book traversal links for The issue and receipt of the writ

Starting the election timetable Notice of election Notice of election You must publish the notice of election for the constituency by not later than 4pm on the second working day following the receipt of the writ. The notice of election may be published on the same day that the writ is received and should be published as soon as practicable to allow the maximum time for nominations. 1 The notice of election must include the following: 2 the place and times at which nomination papers can be delivered, and at which nomination papers may be obtained the date of the poll if the election is contested where you have decided to accept electronic payments, the arrangements for electronic payment of deposits the date by which applications for absent votes (including emergency proxies) must reach the ERO in order to be effective for the election The notice of election should also include the date by which applications for registration and Voter Authority Certificates or Anonymous Elector's Documents must reach the relevant ERO in order to be effective for the election. The address given for the delivery of nomination papers should be exact, and include any room number. This will avoid any doubt should nominations be delivered close to the deadline. You should inform all reception staff at offices of the building and other connected buildings that they should not take receipt of nomination papers. We have developed a template notice of election that you can use:

Notice of election - UK Parliamentary elections (DOCX) 1. Schedule 1 Rule 1 Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 5 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 12 September 2023 Book traversal links for Notice of election The issue and receipt of the writ Poll Card delivery Poll Card delivery You must send out poll cards as soon as practicable after the publication of the notice of election. 1 A poll card must be sent to the elector's qualifying address or, in the case of a proxy, to the proxy's address as shown in the list of proxies. 2 For anonymous electors, you must send their poll card in a covering envelope to the elector's qualifying address or, where a different address has been specified on their registration application, to that address. 3 In order to ensure that voters receive the information they need and within time for them to cast their vote you should ensure that poll cards can be received by voters as soon as possible, so that they have the maximum amount of time to change their registration details or apply for an absent vote. This could, for example, include publishing the notice of election as soon as the writ is received. Once the notice of election has been published, the poll cards can be issued. You will need to determine the optimum distribution date for poll cards and you should focus on when electors will expect to receive their poll cards. Poll cards may be delivered by hand, by post, or by some other method determined by you as the most appropriate. 4 Delivery by hand If you deliver poll cards by hand you should plan for how this will work in practice. You should appoint sufficient staff to ensure that voters receive poll cards as soon as possible to maximise the time they have to change registration details or apply for an absent vote. You should clearly set out

in your instructions to staff the last day by which you would expect all poll cards to have been delivered. You should ensure that staff are aware of data protection considerations, and should consider requiring staff to confirm in writing at the point of recruitment, that they will abide by your data protection policy. You should monitor delivery, to ensure that poll cards have been delivered across the whole of the constituency and to agreed timeframes. This may include requiring delivery staff to fill in log sheets and having supervisors carry out spot-checks. Delivery by post You may use Royal Mail or any other commercial delivery firm for the delivery of poll cards. If you deliver poll cards by post, you should liaise with your postal services provider to agree timescales for delivery and obtain any proof of postage that the firm provides. You should monitor the delivery of poll cards, to ensure that they have been delivered across the whole of the constituency and to agreed timeframes. If possible, you should have arrangements in place to track deliveries to assist with responding to any enquiries from electors. Your contingency planning should address how you would issue any poll cards, in the event that Royal Mail or the commercial delivery firm you have contracted are unable to deliver the poll cards, for example, due to industrial action.

1. Schedule 1 Rule 28 Representation of the People Act (RPA) 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. Schedule 1 Rules 28(2) and (2A) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. Schedule 1 Rules 9B(8) and 28(3A) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3

4. Schedule 1 Rule 28(1) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4

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[Book traversal links for Poll Card delivery](#)

[Notice of election Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Starting the election timetable](#)

[Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Starting the election timetable UKPGE Election timetable generic \(DOCX\)](#)

[UKPE By election timetable generic \(DOCX\)](#)

[Notice of election - UK Parliamentary elections \(DOCX\)](#)

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[Book traversal links for Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Starting the election timetable](#)

[Poll Card delivery](#)

[Nominations](#)

[Nominations As Returning Officer](#)

you are responsible for the administration of a nomination process which supports candidates to stand for election and enables them to have confidence in the management of the election. The following guidance is designed to support you in the decisions you will need to take to manage the nomination process efficiently and effectively. It includes information on the requirements for nomination including candidate details, deposits and methods of delivery, guidance to support the processing and determining of nominations and guidance on the processes to be followed after the close of nominations such as the publishing of official notices. It also includes information on the actions required following the death of a candidate. Providing information on the nomination process to candidates and agents

There may be new or less experienced candidates, agents and political parties who are unfamiliar with the practices and processes of standing for election and who will need your support to be able to participate effectively. As part of your preparations for the polls, you will have put plans in place to ensure that you offer all potential candidates and agents a briefing session before or at the start of the nomination period, and are also issued with written guidance on the election process in good time to enable them to act on it. Details of what the briefings and written information should include, and links to template briefings, can be found in our guidance on providing information to political parties, candidates and agents.

Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Nominations](#)

[Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Starting the election timetable](#)

[Forms for nomination](#)

[Forms for nomination](#)

A candidate is deemed to be validly nominated if you have received a deposit of £500 and the following completed forms by the close of

nominations (4pm on the 19th working day before the poll for a UK Parliamentary general election or by 4pm on the date fixed by you 1 for a UK Parliamentary by-election): 2 the nomination form (as prescribed) a home address form a consent to nomination candidates If a candidate wishes to stand on behalf of a registered political party then, in addition to the above they must also submit a certificate of authorisation, authorising the use of the party name on the ballot paper (as prescribed), and may also include a written request to use one of the party's registered emblems if they choose. 3 The party name or description authorised by the certificate must match the party name or description given on the nomination form or the whole nomination will be invalid. 4 The party must be registered on the Commission's register of political parties at <http://search.electoralcommission.org.uk> and be listed as allowed to field candidates in the part of the UK that they are standing in. Production of nomination papers Nomination papers can only be produced in or, in Wales, in and/or Welsh, and not in any alternative languages or formats. 5 However, you are required by law to prepare nomination papers for signature if someone requests. 6 This means providing all of the documents required for nomination and completing them with all of the information given to you so that only the required signatures need to be added. We have produced a set of nomination papers, which includes all of these forms that you can provide to candidates. Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election (DOC) Candidates do not have to use the nomination form that you have produced and supplied, as long as their nomination form is as prescribed. 1. Not earlier than the third working day after the date of publication of the notice of election and not later than the seventh working day after the writ is received. ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 rules 1,6,8 and 9 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 rule 6A and 19 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Schedule 1 rule 6A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. S. 199B(4) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 6. Schedule 1 rule 7 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 6 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Forms for nomination Nominations Nomination form - the candidates name Nomination form - the candidates name The candidate's full names must be listed on the nomination form, surname first, followed by all of their other names in full. 1 Prefixes and suffixes The nomination form does not prescribe a space for prefixes or suffixes. Candidates should be advised not to use prefixes such as Mr, Mrs, Dr or Cllr, or suffixes such as OBE or MBA as part of their full name. If a prefix or suffix is included as part of the actual name the nomination form would not be invalid as a result, but the prefix or suffix should not be transferred to the statement of persons nominated. If a candidate has submitted a nomination form with a prefix or suffix as part of their actual name, you should inform them that it will not appear on the statement of persons nominated, the notice of poll or the ballot paper, but that their nomination as a candidate has not been affected. The only exception to this is where a prefix or suffix has been included as part of a commonly used name and that is how the candidate claims to be commonly known. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 6 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Nomination form - the candidates name Forms for nomination Commonly used names Commonly used names Where a candidate commonly uses a different name from their actual name, they can ask for this to be used instead of their actual name. 1 A candidate can request to use a commonly used forename, surname or both. They may also use initials if they are commonly known by them. For example, they may be known by their abbreviated name Andy, rather than their full first name

Andrew. In that case, they can write Andy into the commonly used forename box on the nomination form if they would prefer that name to appear on the ballot paper. The legislation makes it clear that a commonly used name is one which, as a forename is different from any other forename (whether the first or middle name) of the candidate or, as a surname is different from any other surname of the candidate. If a candidate wishes to use a commonly used forename, this must be different from their actual forename as it appears on the nomination form. If a candidate wishes to use a commonly used surname, this must be different from their actual surname as it appears on the nomination form. For example, in the case of Andrew John Smith, he could not use Andrew Smith as his commonly used name, although he would be able to use Andy Smith (if Andy was the name by which he is commonly known). A candidate with a hyphenated surname may choose to use one part of their surname if this is how they are commonly known. For example, in the case of Andrew Smith-Roberts, he could use Andrew Roberts or Andrew Smith (if either was the name by which he is commonly known). However, if a candidate has a title, they can use this as their full name. For example, if the candidate's actual name is Joseph Smith, but their hereditary title is Joseph Avon, they can use the name Joseph Avon as their full name. The table below sets out a non-exhaustive list of potential variations:

Candidate actual name	Commonly used name	Different forename from any other forename or surname from any other surname?	Acceptable?
Andrew John Smith-Jones	Andrew Smith-Jones	No	No – a commonly used name cannot be used to drop a middle name.
Andrew John Smith-Jones	John Smith-Jones	No	No – a commonly used name cannot be used to drop a first name.
Andrew John Smith-Jones	Andy Smith-Jones	Yes	Yes - if Andy was the name by which he is commonly known.
Andrew John Smith-Jones	Johnny Smith-Jones	Yes	Yes - if Johnny was the name by which he is commonly known.
Andrew John Smith-Jones	Andrew John Smith	Yes	Yes - a candidate with a hyphenated surname may choose to use one part of their surname if this is how they are commonly known.
Andrew John Smith-Jones	Andy Jones	Yes	Yes - if Andy was the name by which he is commonly known and a candidate with a hyphenated surname may choose to use one part of their surname if this is how they are commonly known.
Andrew John Smith-Jones	AJ Smith-Jones	Yes	Yes - if AJ are initials by which he is commonly known.
Andrew John Smith-Jones	Andrew J Smith	Yes	Yes - if Andrew J was the name by which he is commonly known and a candidate with a hyphenated surname may choose to use one part of their surname if this is how they are commonly known.

It is not for you to decide whether the commonly used name is a name that the candidate commonly uses or whether it meets the legal requirement that a forename needs to be different from any other forename and a surname needs to be different to from any other surname they may have. The law requires you to take whatever has been entered in the commonly used name box at face value and to accept it as the candidate's commonly used name. The only grounds you have in law for rejecting a commonly used name is that you consider that: 2 its use may be likely to mislead or confuse electors, or it is obscene or offensive. If, at an informal check stage, you are presented with a nomination form that has been completed in such a way that it appears to you that the commonly used name given is not different from any other forename or surname that the candidate has, you should: draw the candidate's attention to the legal definition of a commonly used name highlight that it is an offence to knowingly make a false statement on the nomination form point out that if a nomination form is not completed in accordance with the law, the candidate will run the risk of challenge if they are elected It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that they have completed their nomination form in accordance with the law and to be satisfied that the given commonly used name is a name that they genuinely

commonly use. In the course of providing informal advice, you may wish to draw the candidate's attention to our guidance for candidates and agents on commonly used names. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 6 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 14 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 30 March 2023 Book traversal links for Commonly used names Nomination form - the candidates name Reproducing commonly used names on election material Reproducing commonly used names on election material The table below contains a number of worked examples of various combinations of commonly used names and how this would affect the appearance of the candidate's name on the statement of persons nominated, the notice of poll and the ballot paper: Candidate's actual surname Candidate's other names in full Commonly used forenames Commonly used surname Name to go on statement of persons nominated Name to go on ballot papers Elector Ann Elsie Voter Voter, Elsie VOTER, Elsie Elector Ann [Blank] Voter Voter, Ann VOTER, Ann Elector Ann Elsie [Blank] Elector, Elsie ELECTOR, Elsie Elector-Voter Ann [Blank] Voter Voter, Ann VOTER, Ann If either the commonly used forenames or commonly used surname box is left blank, then the candidate's actual forenames or surname, depending on which commonly used name box has been left blank, will go on the statement of persons nominated and on the ballot paper. You should advise the candidate that the use of commonly used names applies only to the statement of persons nominated and the ballot paper. The candidate's actual name should appear on any documents that are required to show the candidate's name, such as the imprint and candidate's spending returns. If you refuse the use of a commonly used name, the validity of the paper remains unaffected. Instead, the effect is that the candidate's full name will appear on the statement of persons nominated and the ballot paper. This should be made clear to candidates and agents and you must write to the candidate setting out the reasons for refusing to allow the use of the commonly used name. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Reproducing commonly used names on election material Commonly used names Nomination form – Subscriber requirements Nomination form – Subscriber requirements Nomination forms must include an indication of support for the candidate from 10 electors registered on the UK Parliamentary register in the constituency. These are known as subscribers - the first two are the proposer and seconder, while eight other electors are the assenters to the nomination. 1 There is nothing preventing a candidate from subscribing their own nomination provided they are registered in the constituency. Each subscriber is required by law to sign the nomination form in the appropriate place and must include their electoral number in the spaces provided alongside their signature, along with the polling district's identifying letters. There is no requirement for a subscriber to print their name on a UK Parliamentary nomination form. Once a nomination form has been formally delivered, even if it is later deemed invalid, the signatures of the subscribers will still count towards the one form that the subscriber may subscribe. If an elector is later removed from the register or dies before the election (or indeed even before the nomination is delivered), their signature remains valid and the nomination is not affected. A person who is shown on the register as being under 18 years old at the time of nomination can only subscribe a nomination form if they will be 18 years old on or before polling day. Only the first 10 subscribers on any nomination form can be considered. If more subscribers are included, any subsequent names must not be considered at all. If one of the first 10 subscribers is invalid, irrespective of whether more subscribers have been added to the nomination form, the nomination must be held invalid. Signatures on nomination forms, once given, cannot be withdrawn by subscribers. If a subscriber contacts you to say that they wish to

withdraw their subscription, you should inform that that this is not permitted by law and that the subscription remains valid. You must reject a nomination if the nomination form is not subscribed as required. 2 Checking subscribers are on the register Subscribers must appear on the Parliamentary electoral register that is in force on the last day for publication of notice of election (i.e. on the second day after that on which the writ is received). It is essential that the correct version of the register is used for checking that the subscribers are valid. An elector must not subscribe more than one nomination form at the Parliamentary election. If they do, their signature will only be valid on the first paper to be delivered to you, even if this was not the first paper that they signed. 3 You should have a robust system in place to ensure that no elector subscribes more than one nomination form. You should use both a hard copy of the register and the electoral management system in order to minimise the risk of missing a subscriber who has subscribed more than one form, and physically mark the hard copy of the register when nominations are formally submitted. As you must accept the nomination form at face value, you must accept that the signature made on the nomination form is that of the person listed on the register under the relevant elector number, even if the signature suggests another name. You may draw the attention of the person delivering the paper to the issue if you are concerned, but you must take the elector number and the signature at face value. If after having raised the issue you still have any concerns, you should raise these with your police Single Point of Contact (SPOC). Crossed out subscribers' names Occasionally a mistake is made and one or more of the subscribers' names may be crossed out. If the signature and elector number for a subscriber are clearly crossed out, you should ignore it and treat it as if that row did not appear at all. If asked, you should advise that any crossings out should be clear and, ideally, initialled. You should not cross out any entry. If the entry that has been crossed out was that of a proposer or seconder, then the new proposer or seconder must be indicated. Where an entry has been crossed out, the first ten subscribers excluding that entry must still be valid for the nomination to be valid. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 7 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 12 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rule 7 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Nomination form – Subscriber requirements Reproducing commonly used names on election material Home address form Home address form Candidates are required to complete a home address form. It must be delivered by hand by the persons who can deliver the nomination form and by the close of nominations. The form is not prescribed but the information that needs to be provided is set out in law. 1 The candidate must state their name and home address on the home address form. The address does not need to be in the constituency in which the candidate intends to stand. The home address: must be completed in full must not contain abbreviations must be their current home address must not be a business address (unless the candidate runs a business from their home) If any detail of the home address is wrong or omitted, the nomination is not automatically invalid if the description of the place is such as to be commonly understood. The Commission has produced a home address form as part of its set of nomination papers that you can use to provide to candidates and agents. Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election (DOC) The home address form, along with the nomination form, is available for inspection by those people entitled to attend at the delivery of nomination papers. Candidates who don't want their home address published A candidate may choose for their home address not to be published on the statement of persons nominated or the ballot paper. In

this case the home address form will contain, as well as the full name and home address: 2 a statement, signed by the candidate, which states that they require their home address not to be made public the UK Parliamentary constituency or, if they live outside the UK, the country in which their home address is situated If the candidate chooses not to have their home address appear on the statement of persons nominated and the ballot paper, the constituency in which the candidate's home address is situated or, if they live outside the UK, the country in which they live must be printed instead. If by the close of nominations more than one validly nominated candidate has asked for their home address not to be published, you must consider if two or more of them have the same or so similar a name that they are likely to cause confusion. If you consider that this is the case, you may add such details from their home address or nomination form as you consider appropriate to reduce the likelihood of confusion. 3 Before you make a decision on which details should be included, you must consult the candidate(s) affected, if it is practicable to do so. You must then give notice in writing to the affected candidate(s) informing them of the additional information that will be published. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 6 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 6(5) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rule 14(4A) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Home address form

Nomination form – Subscriber requirements Candidate's consent to nomination

Candidate's consent to nomination Candidates must formally consent to their nomination and deliver their consent by the deadline for delivery of nomination papers. The consent to nomination form is not prescribed, but the required content is set out in law. 1 The form must contain: the candidate's date of birth a statement that they are aware of the provisions of the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 a statement that to the best of their knowledge they are not disqualified from being a Member of the House of Commons a statement that they are not a candidate at an election for any other UK Parliamentary constituency with the same polling day Candidates are not allowed to sign their consent form earlier than one calendar month before the deadline for submitting their nomination papers. The consent must be witnessed by another person, but there are no restrictions on who can be a witness to the consent to nomination. There is an exception to the requirement for the consent to be delivered in writing and by hand. You may be satisfied that, due to the absence of the candidate from the UK, it is not reasonably practicable for the candidate to provide their consent in writing. In this circumstance, you can treat a candidate's consent given by email or scanned document sent electronically or by other similar means of communication, as written consent. The consent is deemed as having been given on the date it is sent, and does not need to be attested. 2 1. Schedule 1 Rule 8 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 8(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Candidate's consent to nomination

Home address form

Offence of making a false statement on a nomination paper

Offence of making a false statement on a nomination paper You should remind any person delivering the nomination papers that it is a criminal offence to knowingly make a false statement on nomination papers. If the nomination form includes a commonly used name, you should highlight that the offence also applies if a candidate has given a commonly used name that they do not actually commonly use. You may warn candidates that the penalty for a false statement is either an unlimited fine in England and Wales, £10,000 in Scotland and/or up to one year's imprisonment. 1 You should not give advice on questions of candidates' eligibility or disqualification but should direct

them to our guidance for candidates and agents at UK Parliamentary general elections and UK Parliamentary by-elections in the first instance. You should advise them to seek their own legal advice should they have any further concerns. 1. Section 65A Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Offence of making a false statement on a nomination paper Candidate's consent to nomination Use of party names and party descriptions Use of party names and party descriptions Political parties can register up to 12 descriptions 1 and the Welsh translations of those descriptions. You must check that the party name or description as given on the nomination form is registered on Commission's register of political parties and matches it exactly. The party must also be listed as being allowed to field candidates in that part of the UK that the candidate is standing in. If it does not, you must reject that nomination. 2 Even if a registered party is well known, it is vital to check the register of political parties for the exact details of the party as registered with the Commission. In Wales, a candidate may use either the version, Welsh version or both versions of either the party name or a description as long as they are on the register. Translations of party names are listed on the website under other name and translations of descriptions are listed to the right of the description under translation(s). At a UK Parliamentary election, if the party has not registered a translation, a translation of any party name or description cannot be used. In case of any future challenges and to maintain a clear audit trail you should print a copy of the relevant part of the register of political parties showing the descriptions and party name at the time of your determination. What descriptions may be used? A candidate may only use one of the following descriptions: 3 the word 'Independent' or, in Wales, 'Independent' and/or 'Annibynnol' the registered party name of a registered political party one of the descriptions the party has registered with the Commission Certificate of authorisation If a candidate wishes to use a party name or description, this must be authorised by the party's Nominating Officer (or a person authorised to act on their behalf). 4 The candidate must submit a certificate of authorisation, signed by or on behalf of the party's Nominating Officer, by the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers. You can check who the Nominating Officer for a particular party is by referring to our register of political parties . However, as long as the person who has signed the certificate claims that they have been authorised to do so by the registered Nominating Officer, the certificate should be taken at face value. Some candidates provide a document showing the delegation of powers to authorise the use of a party name or description to someone else (sometimes known as the 'Local Nominating Officer certificate' or 'Deputy Nominating Officer certificate'). There is no need for this document to be submitted as it is not part of the nomination paper and is therefore not required. Therefore, if it is supplied, it can be a copy. A Nominating Officer may stand as a candidate. If this happens, the candidate, as Nominating Officer, may authorise their own description. A person authorised by the Nominating Officer to sign a certificate of authorisation may also be a candidate and sign a certificate for their own nomination. Description for the Speaker of the House of Commons The current Speaker of the House of Commons may use the description 'The Speaker seeking re-election' (and/or the equivalent in Welsh). The use of this description in these circumstances does not need to be supported by a certificate of authorisation or any documentary evidence. Any such candidate cannot request a party emblem, and so no emblem of any kind can be printed on the ballot paper beside their name. While the current Speaker of the House of Commons may use the description 'The Speaker seeking re-election', there is no requirement for them

to do so, in which case the preceding paragraphs on candidate's description and the certificate of authorisation would apply to them as to any other candidate. The use of joint descriptions Candidates standing on behalf of more than one political party may use a joint description which is registered with the Commission. 5 Such candidates must submit a certificate of authorisation issued by each of the parties' Nominating Officers (or persons authorised to act on their behalf) by the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers. 6 You can find joint descriptions listed on the register of political parties . To view them, go to the registration page for the relevant parties and within the descriptions section, any joint description will be followed by the words (Joint Description with the xx party). For example The Square and Circle Party Candidate (Joint Description with the Circle Party) would be how the joint description would be listed on the Square Party page. The words in brackets are for explanatory purposes only and do not form part of the description and therefore should not be included on the statement of persons nominated or ballot papers. 1. Section 28A Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA 2000) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rule 6(3) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Schedule 1 Rule 6A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Schedule 1 Rule 6A (1C) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 6. Schedule 1 Rule 6A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 6 Last updated: 30 March 2023 Book traversal links for Use of party names and party descriptions Offence of making a false statement on a nomination paper Request for a party emblem Request for a party emblem Political parties can register up to three emblems. 1 A candidate of a registered party can choose to have a registered emblem of the party they are representing displayed on the ballot paper. The candidate, not the election agent or the Nominating Officer, must make the request in writing to you not later than the deadline for delivery of nominations. 2 To be able to use an emblem a candidate must have used a party name or description other than Independent, or Annibynnol in Wales. 3 In some instances a candidate may also choose to use an emblem of their party without choosing to use an authorised description. They would need to provide the certificate of authorisation as well as the emblem request form but may choose not to include an authorised description on the nomination paper. If the party has more than one registered emblem, the candidate should specify which one they want to use. 4 If the candidate does not specify one, or the registered party changes an emblem after the nomination papers have been submitted but before the close of nominations, you should try to contact the candidate and ask them to select one. You should also tell them that if they do not select a particular emblem before the close of nominations, you will not be able to print an emblem against their name on the ballot paper. The candidate may provide a high-resolution copy of the emblem for use in the printing of ballot papers, or may request that you download the emblem from our website. You must ensure that whatever copy is used is the same as the registered emblem. The maximum size of an emblem on the ballot paper is set by the directions for printing. When adding a party emblem to a ballot paper, the shape of the emblem should not be altered. For example, do not stretch emblems into square shapes if they are not registered as square images on our website, as this would have the effect of altering their appearance. Candidates standing on behalf of more than one party who use a joint description may choose to use a registered emblem of one of the parties that have authorised the use of the description. There is no provision for joint emblems to be registered with the Commission. A zip file of emblem images is available and can be used by your printer to prepare ballot papers. However, it is the information

on our register of political parties that should be used for confirming which emblem to print. 1. Section 29 Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA 2000) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) 2. Schedule 1 Rule 19(2A) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) 3. Schedule 1 Rule 19 RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#) 4. Schedule 1 Rule 19(2A) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 4](#) Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Request for a party emblem](#) [Use of party names and party descriptions](#) [Changes to the register of political parties](#) [Changes to the register of political parties](#) Our register of political parties contains up-to-date information about political parties, registered descriptions and emblems, and shows which names, descriptions and emblems are currently registered for each political party. Removals or substitution of any registered party descriptions on the Commission's register of political parties may take effect up to and including the day before the actual date the notice of election is published. (NOTE - that this is NOT the last day for publication of the notice of election but the date the notice is actually published.) 1 Once the notice of election is published any changes or deletions to any party descriptions do not apply for that election. 2 For example, if you decide to publish your notice of election before the last day that the notice must be published by law, it is possible that a nomination may be submitted which bears a registered party description that no longer appears on the register of political parties. If the deletion of the description has taken effect after you have published your notice of election but before the last day for publication of notice of election, the deletion does not apply to your election and the 'old' description is still valid. In such circumstances you can check with you local Commission team and whether or not the submitted party description applies for your election. 3 You should also note that political parties may change their registered party name and emblems, and add any new description if they previously had registered fewer than 12, at any time until the close of nominations. 4 The table below sets out the deadlines for making changes to the register of political parties in the run up to a poll. After that point, any changes or deletions to any party descriptions do not apply for that election. 5 What does the party want to do the register of political parties? When can this be done? Add any new descriptions where fewer than 12 are held Up until the close of nominations 6 Alter party names and/or emblems Up until the close of nominations 7 Remove or substitute any register description Up to and including the day before the actual date for the publication of the notice of election 8 Party description - not yet registered Where a candidate attempts to submit a nomination paper bearing a description that has yet to be registered, you should advise the candidate not to formally submit the paper, but to take it back and submit it once the description has been successfully registered. If a candidate formally submits their nomination form with a description that is not yet registered, you must determine the nomination invalid on the basis that, when the determination is made, the description provided does not match any registered with the Commission. 9 You may wish to contact your local Commission team for confirmation that a description is not yet registered before making your determination. 1. Section 30(6A), Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA) 2000 ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) 2. Section 30 (6A), PERA 2000 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) 3. Section 30 PERA 2000 ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#) 4. Section 30 PERA 2000 ■ [Back to content at footnote 4](#) 5. Section 30 (6A) PERA 2000 ■ [Back to content at footnote 5](#) 6. Section 30 PERA 2000 ■ [Back to content at footnote 6](#) 7. Section 30 PERA 2000 ■ [Back to content at footnote 7](#) 8. Section 30(6A) PERA 2000 ■ [Back to content at footnote 8](#) 9. Schedule 1 Rule 6A Representation of the People Act 1983

(RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 9 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Changes to the register of political parties Request for a party emblem Deposit to stand for election Deposit to stand for election In order to be validly nominated, a candidate or someone acting on the candidate's behalf must also deposit the sum of £500 with you by the close of nominations. 1 You must accept deposits made using: legal tender (cash in British pounds only) a UK banker's draft You may refuse to accept a banker's draft if you do not know whether the drawer carries on business as a banker in the United Kingdom. You can also choose to accept funds by means of: a building society cheque a debit or credit card electronic transfer of funds You should accept building society cheques if they carry out business in the United Kingdom. You should also accept banker's payments, which are orders issued by a bank guaranteeing payment to the recipient. If you decide to accept any of these methods you should list them on the notice of election and make any requirements you have clear in the nomination pack. If the deposit is given to you by someone acting on behalf of the candidate, the person delivering the deposit must give you their name and address, unless they have already provided this information as part of their notification of appointment as an election agent. You must return the deposit to the person who made it or, if they have died, their personal representative, in the following circumstances: the candidate withdraws before the deadline for withdrawals you reject a candidate's nomination and they are not shown as validly nominated on the statement of persons nominated the candidate dies and proof of death has been given to you before you conclude the first count 2 If there is a fee attached to the form of payment, you can pass this on to the candidate. If so, you should make this clear on the notice of election and the nomination pack. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 9 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 53 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Deposit to stand for election Changes to the register of political parties Delivery of nomination papers Delivery of nomination papers This guidance explains the requirements for the delivery of nomination papers. It sets out what you should do to prepare for and undertake informal checking of papers before they are formally delivered and who can deliver nomination papers to you for submission. It also explains what papers must be submitted and how they should be completed in order for you to be able to determine them, along with the method of submission and who is entitled to deliver and attend the delivery of nomination papers. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Delivery of nomination papers Deposit to stand for election Carrying out informal checks Carrying out informal checks The purpose of an informal check is to check that a nomination paper appears to be complete in respect of all the legal requirements. When conducting an informal check you should make it clear that the nomination papers are being looked at informally only. This process allows you to highlight any errors which would invalidate the paper or which may give reason for a challenge following the election, allowing the opportunity for these to be corrected before being formally submitted. Once informal checks are complete, the papers will either be handed back, or if there are no amendments to be made, they may be formally submitted. The person delivering the nomination paper may choose not to wait for an informal check or may choose not to make any changes following advice given at the informal checking stage. If that is the case the paper should be considered as formally submitted and you should accept it at face value. All candidates and agents should be given an equal opportunity to access an informal check. You should consider how you are going to manage this process, for example by putting in place an appointment system. Last updated: 31 May

2023 Book traversal links for Carrying out informal checks Delivery of nomination papers Time for delivery of nomination papers Time for delivery of nomination papers The deadline for the delivery of nominations for a UK Parliamentary general election is 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll. This deadline cannot be moved or extended for any reason. Nomination papers can be delivered to you between the hours of 10am and 4pm from the day after publication of notice of election. 1 UK Parliamentary by-elections UK Parliamentary by-elections For a UK Parliamentary by-election, the deadline for the delivery of nominations is fixed by you, within the constraints of the statutory timetable. The date fixed should not be earlier than the third working day after the date of publication of the notice of election and not later than the seventh working day after the writ is received. The date you choose should maximise the length of time that candidates have to submit their nomination papers. Once fixed, this deadline cannot be moved or extended for any reason. Time for delivery of nomination papers A nomination paper is considered delivered when it is delivered by hand at the place specified in the notice of election. For party candidates wishing to use a description and/or an emblem, you must also receive a certificate of authorisation and an emblem request form as applicable during the time specified for the delivery of nomination papers. No appointment is required for the delivery of nomination papers but you could offer and encourage appointments as a way to manage the potential volume of nominations that you will receive during the very short period for UK Parliamentary nominations. The candidate is responsible for making sure that their nomination papers are delivered in the correct way and by the required deadline. If a completed set of nomination papers and the deposit have not been delivered by that time, the nomination is treated as not having been made which means that you cannot rule the nomination valid or invalid. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Time for delivery of nomination papers Carrying out informal checks Place of delivery of nomination papers Place of delivery of nomination papers Nomination papers must be delivered to a specific location of your choice at the relevant council offices. You must include the location on the notice of election. In England and Wales, the location you choose must be: 1 in the constituency, or in the registration area which includes the constituency, or in the case of a county constituency – in a district or a Welsh county or county borough adjoining the constituency or registration area The registration area is defined as the area of two or more constituencies which have the same registration officer. 2 In Scotland, the location must be: 3 in the constituency, or in the local government area (or, if more than one, any of the local government areas) in which the constituency is situated, or in any local government area adjoining the local government area (or local government areas) in which the constituency is situated The location included on the notice of election for the delivery of nomination papers should be exact and include any room name or number. This ensures there can be no doubt about where a nomination paper should be delivered. You should: ensure that only you or your staff take delivery of nomination papers at the specified location clearly signpost the location from the building entrance ensure the route is fully accessible or provide an appropriately signposted alternative give details to other local authority staff, such as reception staff, of what to do if a person tries to deliver a nomination paper to them and make it clear that they: should not handle nomination papers should not offer to deliver them should instead direct the person delivering the forms to you You or an appointed deputy must be present throughout the period for nominations to deal with nominations. 4 1. Schedule 1 Rule 10

Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 10 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rule 10 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. S. 28 and Schedule 1 Rule 10 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Place of delivery of nomination papers Time for delivery of nomination papers Who can deliver nomination papers? Who can deliver nomination papers? The nomination and home address form may only be delivered by: 1 the candidate the proposer or seconder as shown on the nomination form the candidate's election agent, provided you have received notification of their appointment The notice of appointment of the election agent may be delivered at the same time as the nomination and home address form. There are no restrictions on who can deliver the consent to nomination, certificate of authorisation and emblem request forms. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 6 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Who can deliver nomination papers? Place of delivery of nomination papers Attendance at delivery of nomination papers Attendance at delivery of nomination papers Only certain people are entitled to attend the delivery of nomination papers and to inspect and make any objections to the validity of a nomination form or home address form. You can find more information on dealing with objections in our guidance: Objections to nominations . After a candidate has delivered their nomination papers and deposit and they stand validly nominated, they are entitled to attend the delivery of other candidates' nomination papers and make objections. In addition to the candidate, the following persons will also be able to attend and make objections: 1 their election agent their proposer or seconder, as stated on the nomination form If a candidate is their own election agent, they can appoint one other person to attend the delivery of nomination papers and make objections. If a candidate has submitted more than one nomination form, only the proposer and seconder from the nomination form they have selected will be entitled to attend. If none has been selected, it will be the proposer and seconder of the first submitted nomination form who will have that entitlement. Nomination papers cannot be inspected by anybody else at any time. Electoral Commission representatives and one other person chosen by a validly nominated candidate can also be present at the delivery of nomination papers, but they are not allowed to inspect or make any objections to nomination papers. You should make it clear to persons inspecting a home address form which asks for the candidate's home address not to be published that the information on the form should only be used by the person inspecting to: object to the nomination lodge an election petition make a complaint to the police that a person has made a false statement You should make it clear to the person inspecting that any other use of the information on the form may be in breach of data protection legislation and so could make a person using the information for any other purpose liable to criminal prosecution. You must keep the nomination papers securely stored and allow inspection of the nomination and home address forms by the persons permitted to inspect these until the deadline for making objections to the nomination papers. 2 Once the deadline for making objections has passed, you should store the nomination papers securely for one year after the election due to the time limit for prosecution in case of an election petition. The home address form must be destroyed after 21 days. 3 1. Schedule 1 Rule 11 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 11 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rule 53A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Attendance at delivery of nomination papers Who can deliver nomination papers? How nomination papers must be

submitted How nomination papers must be submitted The original version of each completed document must be submitted. 1 The nomination form, home address form and consent to nomination must be delivered by hand. 2 This includes delivery by courier. The only exception to this is where a candidate is overseas, in which case their consent to nomination may be sent electronically. 3 Certificates of authorisation and emblem request forms may be delivered by hand or by post, but cannot be delivered by email or other electronic means. This is because a document that is printed out is not an original document – it would be a copy document. For a document to become a certificate (as required for a Certificate of Authorisation), it requires a method of authentication. In most cases, the authentication takes the form of a signature to attest the truth of the facts stated. A seal could also be used. Whatever method of authentication is used, the document delivered must be the original document. A copy document is not acceptable. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 6 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rules 6 and 8 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rules 6 and 8 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for How nomination papers must be submitted Attendance at delivery of nomination papers Nomination papers received by post Nomination papers received by post Nomination forms, home address forms and consent to nomination forms cannot be delivered by post. Only the certificate of authorisation and emblem request can be received by post. Any certificates of authorisation and emblem requests received by post should be stored securely until required and collated with corresponding nomination papers delivered by hand as appropriate. You should have a process in place to monitor your incoming mail to ensure it does not contain nomination papers that must be delivered by hand. If you receive a nomination paper, home address form or consent to nomination form by post, you should try to contact the candidate and explain: that their nomination form, home address form and consent to nomination cannot be accepted by post that they (or someone on their behalf) needs to hand deliver these in accordance with the rules that it is their responsibility to ensure that this is done by the deadline that they do not need to produce new nomination papers or obtain new subscribers You should keep any nomination papers you receive by post so they can be collected and then delivered to you by hand. You and your staff are not permitted to deliver the forms for the candidate. The candidate is deemed not to have been nominated if: you receive a nomination form, home address form or consent to nomination by post 1 you have not received all of the required nomination forms by the deadline for delivery of nomination papers You cannot determine forms which have not been delivered or take any decision as to whether these papers are valid. 2 1. Schedule 1 Rules 6 and 8 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rules 6 and 8 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Nomination papers received by post How nomination papers must be submitted Delivery of multiple nomination forms Delivery of multiple nomination forms There is no limit to the number of nomination forms that may be delivered for the same candidate. If a candidate is validly nominated by more than one form: the candidate should choose one of the valid nomination forms – to be known as the 'selected' nomination form details on this selected nomination form should be added to the statement of persons nominated and the ballot paper If the candidate does not select a form, you must choose which one of the forms will be used. 1 A candidate may request that the details of their proposers, seconders and other subscribers for up to two more valid nomination forms be added to the statement of persons nominated. As such, the

statement should have space to enable the names of up to 30 subscribers to be added if requested. If more than one nomination form is delivered and one of the nomination papers is invalid: the invalid form is excluded from those that can be chosen by the candidate or yourself as the selected form as long as at least one nomination form is valid, the candidate can be validly nominated. Signatures from subscribers on any delivered nomination form will count towards the maximum number they may subscribe. 2 For more information see our guidance on the subscriber requirements . 1. Schedule 1 Rule 14 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 7 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Delivery of multiple nomination forms Nomination papers received by post Formal delivery Formal delivery A nomination is formally delivered at the point where: a paper is left with you and the offer of an informal check was not accepted the informal check has been conducted, any issues addressed and the person delivering the nomination paper has indicated they are satisfied that it is ready to be determined All candidates should be offered an informal check. Further information is available in our guidance on carrying out informal checks. Once a nomination form has been formally delivered, no changes can be subsequently made to it (subject to your power to correct minor errors). You can find more information on your power to correct minor errors in the section Mistakes on nomination papers . You should endorse each form with the date and time of formal delivery, so that you have a record of when each paper was formally submitted. If a candidate later decides that they want to make a change to their nomination paper after it has been formally submitted, for example to the description, this can only be done by: withdrawing their candidature submitting new nomination papers within the statutory timeframe Similarly, there is no provision to allow a subscriber to withdraw their signature from a nomination paper once it has been delivered. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Formal delivery Delivery of multiple nomination forms Processing nominations Processing nominations Determining nomination and home address forms after formal delivery A candidate who delivers completed nomination papers by the required deadline will be deemed nominated unless: you decide that the nomination form is invalid a candidate dies or withdraws before the deadline 1 You must determine the validity of a nomination form and home address form as soon as possible after formal delivery. This enables candidates whose nominations have been deemed invalid to submit new papers before the close of nominations. We have also produced a checklist to assist you with processing nomination forms. Nomination checklist for UK Parliamentary elections (DOC) Accepting nominations at face value You must not: undertake any investigation or research into any candidate. Your duty does not go beyond seeing that a nomination form is correct on face value 2 You should not: investigate whether a name given on a nomination form is genuine You should: disregard any personal knowledge you may already have of the candidate determine nominations on the basis of the form itself 1. Representation of the People Act 1983 sch 1 rule 12 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Greenway Stanley v Paterson [1977] 2 All ER 663; R v An Election Court ex parte Sheppard [1975] 1 WLR 1319 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Processing nominations Formal delivery Determining a nomination to be invalid Determining a nomination to be invalid Grounds for determining a nomination form invalid By law, the only grounds you have for determining that a nomination form is invalid are: 1 that the particulars of the candidate or the persons subscribing the nomination form are not as required by law that the paper is not subscribed as required that the person is disqualified under the Representation of the People Act

1981 on the grounds that they are imprisoned and serving a sentence of a year or more

Particulars of the candidate The particulars of the candidate include the description given on the nomination paper, therefore, the nomination must be deemed invalid if:

- the party does not appear on the Commission's register of political parties as a party that can contest elections in your part of the country
- the party name or description used on the nomination form does not exactly match the party name or description as registered with the Commission
- the use of the party name or description has not been authorised by a certificate of authorisation signed by or on behalf of the party's Nominating Officer
- the certificate of authorisation explicitly authorises a specific name or description and this does not match the party name/description on the nomination form

2 There is case law that provides that candidates who give descriptions that are obscene, racist or an incitement to crime should be considered to have provided particulars that are "not as required by law". This is because they contravene the law and/or will inevitably involve the Returning Officer in a breach of the law. If the nomination form does not comply with the description rules you must give a determination decision to that effect as soon as practicable after the delivery of the nomination form and in any event within 24 hours after the deadline for the delivery of nominations.

3 We have produced a nominations checklist for (A)ROs which sets out what you will need to consider and specific things to look out for when determining a nomination.

Nomination checklist for UK Parliamentary elections (DOC)

Subscribers Our section 'Nomination form - subscribers requirements' contains detailed information on subscribers. If a nomination is not subscribed as required it must be deemed invalid.

Failure to provide a deposit If you have not received the required £500 deposit or any of the required nomination papers by the deadline for the submission of nomination papers, the candidate has not been validly nominated. There is then no need to make a formal determination, and their name should not appear on the statement of persons nominated.

4 **Return of deposit due to nomination not being valid** You must return the deposit of any candidate whose nomination you have rejected. The deposit must be returned to the person who made it and as soon as practicable after the statement of persons nominated has been published.

5 For guidance on returning deposits to validly nominated candidates after an election see [Post election activity](#).

Grounds for determining a home address form invalid You must determine that the home address form does not comply with the legal requirements if:

- 6 it does not state the candidate's full name
- it does not state the candidate's home address in full

Sham nominations You may come across a situation where the candidate's nomination is clearly a sham - for example, if a candidate has given an obviously fictitious name or address such as 'Mickey Mouse of Disney Land'. In such a case, the nomination form must be held to be invalid on the grounds that the candidate's particulars are not as required by law.

7 When considering the name, the first consideration should be whether the "name" that has been provided on the nomination form appears to be "obviously fictitious" on the face of the paper. If the "name" does not appear to be a genuine name and instead appears to be a statement or slogan, for example, you may consider that it is "obviously fictitious". Any conclusion would be supported by considering the wider context. For example, does the name appear to be a political slogan made in response to topical political events, rather than the genuine name of a real person? A court would likely in those circumstances conclude that such names are "obviously fictitious" and that the nomination form should be rejected.

1. Schedule 1 rule 12(2) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)

2. Schedule 1 rule 12(2) RPA1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#)

3. Schedule 1 rule

12(3A) RPA1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Schedule 1 rule 12(1) RPA1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Schedule 1 rule 53(3) RPA1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 6. Schedule 1 rule 12(1) RPA1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 6 7. Sanders v Chichester (1995) 139 SJLB 15 ■ Back to content at footnote 7 Last updated: 30 March 2023 Book traversal links for Determining a nomination to be invalid Processing nominations After formally determining a nomination paper After formally determining a nomination paper Once you have decided that a nomination is valid, it cannot be challenged during the election, although it may be challenged after the election through an election petition. 1 If you have made a formal determination but then, as a result of an objection, later decide that the nomination should in fact have been determined as invalid, you can make a further determination to this effect. If you determine a nomination to be invalid, you must: state this on the nomination form write the reasons for rejection on the form sign the form contact the candidate and agent as soon as possible so that they may have the opportunity, wherever possible, to submit another nomination form before the close of nominations 2 1. Schedule 1 rule 12 (5) and (6) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 rule 12 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for After formally determining a nomination paper Determining a nomination to be invalid Withdrawal of a candidate before the deadline Withdrawal of a candidate before the deadline A nominated candidate can withdraw their candidature if they do so before the deadline. A withdrawal notice is not prescribed in legislation but we do provide a template withdrawal notice for candidates to use. A notice of withdrawal must be: 1 signed by the candidates attested by one witness delivered by hand to the place for the delivery of nomination papers delivered by 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll There are no restrictions on who can deliver a notice of withdrawal. If the candidate is not in the UK, a notice of withdrawal will be effective if it is: 2 signed by the proposer accompanied by a written declaration that the candidate is abroad (also signed by the proposer) delivered to you by 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll If the candidate was nominated by more than one nomination form, each proposer must sign the notice and declaration. 3 If any of the proposers are outside the UK they do not need to sign the notice, but the notice must, by law, include a statement that they are also outside the UK. 4 Template Withdrawal Form Return of deposit due to withdrawal You must return the deposit of any candidate who has withdrawn their candidature. The deposit must be returned to the person who made it and as soon as practicable after the statement of persons nominated has been published. 5 For guidance on returning deposits to validly nominated candidates after an election see our section on Post election activity . 1. Schedule 1 Rule 13 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 13 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rule 13(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Schedule 1 Rule 13(2)(b) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Schedule 1 Rule 53(3) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Withdrawal of a candidate before the deadline After formally determining a nomination paper Mistakes on nomination papers Mistakes on nomination papers Subject to your power to correct minor errors no changes can be made to a nomination paper once it has been formally delivered. Correction of minor errors The information in this section explains how to deal with minor errors and you must have regard to this. 1 You can, by law, correct minor errors made on nomination and home address forms at any time before you publish the statement of persons nominated. 2 You should attempt

to contact the candidate or agent before making any minor error amendment. The table below sets out some of the minor errors which can be corrected and guidance about exercising your power to correct minor errors. You should contact us for advice when considering correcting minor errors.

Type of error

Guidance

Errors in elector numbers

Where an elector number has been entered incorrectly, you may amend it if you are satisfied that an error has been made. However, where the elector number has been omitted altogether this does not amount to an error and the nomination form should be deemed invalid on the basis that the number has not been supplied 3 .

Obvious spelling errors in candidate's details

Care should be taken in exercising this power - what is an obvious spelling error to one person may not be to another.

Errors in a home address

Where a home address is not absolutely correct there may not be a need to make a correction. By law, errors in a home address do not affect the validity of a nomination form, as long as the address can be commonly understood.

1. Schedule 1 rule 14A Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. Schedule 1 rule 14A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. Schedule 1 rule 12(2)(a) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3

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Book traversal links for Mistakes on nomination papers

Withdrawal of a candidate before the deadline

Objections to nominations

Objections to nominations

Certain people may object to the validity of a nomination form or home address form. More information on who can object to nominations can be found in the attendance at nominations section. Objections can be made on the last day for delivery of nomination papers during the hours for delivery and for one hour after (i.e. up until 5pm).

1 The only exception is where the objection is on the grounds that a candidate is disqualified because they are serving a prison sentence of a year or more . In this case, objections can be made between 10am and 4pm on the next working day after the deadline for delivery of nomination papers.

Timetable for objections

The time within which an ordinary objection can be made depends on when the nomination papers are delivered.

2 When was the nominations form delivered? When can the nomination form be objected to?

Nominations delivered up to 4pm on the day before the deadline for delivery of nomination papers (E-20) Objection must be made between 10 am and 12 noon on the last day for submitting nomination papers (E-19)

Nominations delivered after 4pm on the day before the deadline for delivery of nomination papers (E-20) Objection must be made between 10am and 5pm on the last day for submitting nomination papers (E-19) and also must be made at or immediately after the time of the delivery of the nomination

1. Schedule 1 Rules 1 and 11 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. Schedule 1 Rule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

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Book traversal links for Objections to nominations

Mistakes on nomination papers

Objections on the grounds that a candidate is imprisoned for a year or more

Objections on the grounds that a candidate is imprisoned for a year or more

If it appears to you that a candidate might be disqualified from standing for election by the Representation of the People Act 1981 (i.e. because they are imprisoned and serving a sentence of a year or more), you must publish a draft statement of persons nominated that shows persons who have been and stand nominated as soon as practicable after the close of nominations. The draft statement must:

- be headed 'draft statement of persons nominated'
- contain a notice stating that any person who wishes to object to the nomination of a candidate on the ground that they are disqualified from standing for election by the Representation of the People Act 1981 may do so between 10am and 4pm at the place specified in the notice
- specify the date on which such objections can be made

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Book traversal links for Objections on the grounds that a

candidate is imprisoned for a year or more

Objections to nominations

Decisions on objections

You should consider any objection that you receive during the allowed time for objections to be made. You are only entitled to hold a nomination invalid on the following grounds:

- 1 that the particulars of the candidate or subscribers are not as required by law
- that the form is not subscribed as required
- that the candidate is disqualified under the Representation of the People Act 1981 on the grounds that they are imprisoned and serving a sentence of a year or more

You should not undertake any investigation or hear any representations in support of or challenging any fact or statement given on the nomination or home address form. You must decide any objection as soon as practicable after it is made and in any event within 24 hours after the close of nominations.

- 2 You should limit the objection process to the nomination and home address forms. Where you decide that, as a result of an objection, a nomination you have already determined should have been ruled invalid, you must: show on the statement of persons nominated any candidate who is no longer validly nominated the reason why they no longer stand nominated You should inform the candidate as appropriate.
- 3 For more information see section Determining a nomination to be invalid .

1. Schedule 1 Rule 12 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)
2. Schedule 1 Rule 12(3) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#)
3. Schedule 1 Rule 12(4) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#)

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Book traversal links for Decisions on objections

Objections on the grounds that a candidate is imprisoned for a year or more

After the close of nominations

After the close of nominations

After the close of nominations

you must publish a statement of persons nominated and a notice of poll.

- 1 For details on what these notices should contain and steps you should take when proofing, see our guidance on production of notices .

Uncontested elections

The election is uncontested if either: only one valid nomination is received all valid nominations are properly withdrawn by the deadline except one

If the election is uncontested, you must publish the statement of persons nominated as soon as practicable declaring the one validly nominated candidate elected.

- 2 You should then return the writ with the details of the successful candidate. No poll is necessary.

1. Schedule 1 Rule 14 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)
2. Schedule 1 Rule 17(2) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#)

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Book traversal links for After the close of nominations

Decisions on objections

Producing election notices

Producing election notices

Translation and formats of notices

You must ensure that notices are translated or provided in another format if appropriate.

- 1 You may produce them: in Braille in languages other than (or, in Wales, and Welsh) using graphical representations in audio format
- 2 using any other means of making information accessible

The nomination form and the ballot papers cannot be produced in any other language or format.

- 3 The enlarged hand-held and display copies of the ballot paper(s) used in the polling station must have the instructions for voters printed at the top of the paper(s). These instructions may be translated into languages other than or, in Wales, and Welsh.
- 4 Ensuring information on notices is accessible

You should ensure that any information about the polls, including the notices of election and notices of poll are: easily accessible to all voters available in an accessible format available in time for voters to cast their vote

Information can be made available through the local authority website. The information provided on your website should be accessible to voters. You could speak to your authority's equalities officer or web team for advice on how to do this. If you are providing information in PDF format, you should be aware that if certain steps are not followed when creating PDFs, they may not be compatible with screen

readers and other assistive technologies. The UK Government has produced a guide to producing accessible PDFs you can refer to. 1. Section 199B(2) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Section 199B(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Section 199B(4)(b) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Section 199B(5) and (6) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4

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Book traversal links for Producing election notices

After the close of nominations

Publishing election notices

Publishing election notices

When you are required to publish notices, you should publish and display them in a place in the electoral area where they will be seen. This should include local authority offices, noticeboards, libraries and other public buildings. You may also give notices in any other manner you think fit. 1 You should apply robust proof checking processes to help: detect any errors avoid any potential data breaches before they occur You can find more information on proof checking processes in our quality assurance guidance and you can find a quality assurance checklist here. Quality Assurance Guidance for ROs (PDF) Data protection considerations for election notices

As the data controller you will need to consider whether it is appropriate or necessary for notices to remain published, on your website or elsewhere, beyond the expiry of the petition period for the election. For example, where a notice serves a specific purpose – such as advising who will be a candidate at the election - once the election is over, and the opportunity to question that election has passed, the notice serves no further purpose. Once the petition deadline for the election has passed you should either remove the notices from the website or remove the personal data contained in the notices. Data protection legislation permits personal data to be stored for longer periods, subject to the implementation of appropriate safeguards if the data will be processed:

- solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, or
- for scientific, historical, or statistical purposes

For example, notices of election results on your website should be retained as they are for public interest and have historical and statistical purposes. For more information see our guidance on data protection considerations. 1. Section 200(1A) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1

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Book traversal links for Publishing election notices

Producing election notices

Publishing the statement of persons nominated

Publishing the statement of persons nominated

If there are no objections to nomination papers, you must publish a statement of persons nominated for the constituency at 5pm on the last day for delivery of nomination papers. If there are objections, the statement must be published by 4pm on the working day after the last day for nominations. 1 Contents of the statement of persons nominated

The statement of persons nominated must include the following information for all candidates who are validly nominated: name home address (or, if they have requested not to make their home address public, the constituency name or country as appropriate) description (if any) subscribers' names (up to 30, taken from the 'selected nomination form' and up to two others if multiple nomination forms have been delivered) It must also include those who no longer stand nominated and the reason why (i.e. those who have withdrawn or whose nomination you have rejected). 2 Your privacy notice should make clear that, under electoral legislation, you are required to publish the candidates' name and address information in the statement of persons nominated. You can find out more about the data protection considerations of a privacy notice in our data protection guidance. The statement of persons nominated must also include the notice of poll if the election is contested. More information about the notice of poll can be found in our guidance on Publishing the notice of poll .

Ordering of names on the statement of persons

nominated The names of the candidates must be listed in alphabetical order of their surname. 3 This is also how they will appear on the ballot paper. 4 If there are two or more candidates with the same surname, the alphabetical order of the other names will decide which candidate is listed first. 5 If a person has requested the use of a commonly used name on their nomination paper, the commonly used name must be shown on the statement instead of the actual name. 6 Where a candidate has requested the use of a commonly used surname, the candidate's alphabetical position on the statement of persons nominated and on the ballot paper must be made by reference to their commonly used surname. If, however, you have rejected the use of any commonly used name as you think it is likely to mislead or confuse electors, or is obscene or offensive, the actual name must, by law, be published on the statement of persons nominated instead of the commonly used name. Considerations where a candidate has asked for their home address not to be published If more than one validly nominated candidate has: asked for their home address not to be published, and has provided the same relevant area of the UK (or the same country) on their home address form as another candidate(s) You must consider whether two or more of them have the same name or a name so similar that it is likely to cause confusion. 7 If you consider that this is the case, you may add such details from their home address or nomination form as you consider appropriate to reduce the likelihood of confusion. 8 You must consult the candidate(s) affected, if it is practicable to do so, before you make a decision on which details should be included on the statement of persons nominated. You must give notice in writing to the affected candidate(s) informing them of the additional information that will be published. 9 You should have robust proof-checking processes in place to ensure that there are no errors on the statement of persons nominated. You can find information about proof checking in our quality assurance guidance , and in the following quality assurance checklist. Quality Assurance Guidance for ROs (PDF) 1. Schedule 1 Rule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 14 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rule 14(3) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Schedule 1 Rule 19(3) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Schedule 1 Rule 14(3) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 6. Schedule 1 Rule 14(2A) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 6 7. Schedule 1 Rule 14(4A)(a) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 7 8. Schedule 1 Rule 14(4A)(b) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 8 9. Schedule 1 Rule 14(4B) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 9 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Publishing the statement of persons nominated Publishing election notices Publishing the notice of poll Publishing the notice of poll You must publish a notice of poll for the constituency if there are two or more candidates and there is to be a contest, stating the day and hours fixed for the poll. 1 You must include the notice of poll on the statement of persons nominated. You should give a copy of the statement of persons nominated with the notice of poll to all candidates and election agents as soon as practicable after its publication. We have published a template notice of poll here. Notice of poll - UK Parliamentary elections (DOC) 1. Schedule 1 Rule 23 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Publishing the notice of poll Publishing the statement of persons nominated Publishing the notice of situation of polling stations Publishing the notice of situation of polling stations You must publish the notice of situation of polling stations. It must give public notice of: 1 the situation of each polling station in the area the description of voters entitled to vote there If no objections to nominations have been received, you must publish the notice no later than 5pm on the last day for the delivery of

nomination papers. If objections have been lodged, you must publish the notice on the next working day after the last day for delivery of nomination papers. 2 You may choose to combine the notice of the situation of polling stations with the statement of persons nominated and notice of poll. Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies You should liaise with the local government ROs within your area to ensure you have all of the relevant information regarding elections and by-elections in other local authorities and the location of polling stations to enable you to produce the notice of situation of polling stations. Publishing the notice of situation of polling stations You should have robust proof-checking processes in place to ensure that there are no errors on the notice of situation of polling stations. You can find more information about proof checking in our quality assurance guidance , and you can find a quality assurance checklist here. Quality Assurance Guidance for ROs (PDF) You must give a copy of the relevant notice of situation of polling stations and descriptions of voters entitled to vote there to all election agents as soon as practicable after giving the notice. 3 You should also give a copy of the relevant notice to all candidates. You should also be prepared to make these notices available to any accredited observers on request. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 23 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rules 1 and 23(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rules 1 and 23(2)(c) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Publishing the notice of situation of polling stations Publishing the notice of poll Death of a candidate Death of a candidate The impact that the death of a candidate will have on the election depends on whether the deceased candidate was standing as an independent or was standing on behalf of a registered political party. For the purposes of the management of the election, it is the time at which you receive proof of the candidate's death that is the relevant factor, not the actual time of death. Proof of death is not defined. You should be satisfied with any information that you have received to indicate that the death has occurred. Death of an independent candidate In the event that an independent candidate dies during the election period the election continues as normal. The impact of the death of an independent candidate on the result of an election is set out in the following table. Scenario Action Scenario one If the deceased candidate receives the most votes, they are not elected and the election is re-run. All of the existing candidates remain nominated for the new election although candidates may withdraw. 1 New nomination forms are not required. No new nominations are allowed. The retention or return of the deposit for candidates is determined by the result of the re-run election. Scenario two If the deceased candidate did not receive the most votes, the winning candidate is declared elected and the election is not affected. Scenario three If the deceased candidate came joint first with the same number of votes as any other candidate, the other candidate is declared elected. Scenario four If only two persons are standing nominated and an independent candidate dies, the election is treated as an uncontested election and the other candidate is declared elected. In all circumstances, you must return the deposit of the deceased candidate to the person who made it. If the deceased candidate made the deposit, you must return the deposit to their personal representative. Death of a party candidate Scenario Action Scenario one If a candidate standing on behalf of a political party (or as a joint candidate standing on behalf of two or more parties) dies before polls open, the poll will be countermanded, meaning the poll will be cancelled. Scenario two If a candidate standing on behalf of a political party (or as a joint candidate standing on behalf of two or more parties) dies after the polls have opened but

before the declaration of result, the election is stopped immediately. Scenario three If a candidate standing on behalf of a political party (or as a joint candidate standing on behalf of two or more parties) dies after the poll has closed and count is being undertaken, the count process stops. In all of the scenarios concerning death of a party candidate, there will be a new election. 2 All of the existing candidates remain nominated for the new election although they may withdraw. 3 New nomination forms are not required. No new nominations are allowed. The only exception is that a new candidate can be nominated to stand on behalf of the same party (or parties) as the candidate who died. In this circumstance, the nomination paper for the new candidate must be submitted by the close of nominations based on the new timetable. The retention or return of the deposit is determined by the result of the re-run election. Death of the Speaker of the House of Commons If a candidate who was the Speaker of the House of Commons seeking re-election has died after the polls have opened but before the declaration of the result, the election is stopped immediately. If a candidate who was the Speaker of the House of Commons seeking re-election has died and the polls have not opened, the poll is countermanded. If the count is being undertaken, that process stops. In the circumstance of any of the scenarios above, there will be a new election. 4 In the case of the death of the Speaker new nominations are allowed for the new election. These must be submitted in the usual way and by the deadline for nominations based on the new timetable. Timetable for the new election due to death of a candidate The timetable for the new election will be prepared as if the writ was received seven working days after you received proof of the death. The new polling day must be between 21 and 27 working days after the day on which the writ is taken to have been received. 5 1. Schedule 1 Rules 60, 61 and 62 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Schedule 1 Rule 63 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Schedule 1 Rules 60, 61 and 62 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Schedule 1 Rule 64 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Schedule 1 Rule 61 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 Last updated: 30 March 2023 Book traversal links for Death of a candidate Publishing the notice of situation of polling stations Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Nominations Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Nominations Emblem_UK-V2 Nomination checklist for UK Parliamentary elections (DOC) Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election (DOC) Notice of poll - UK Parliamentary elections (DOC) Quality Assurance Guidance for ROs (PDF) Withdrawal form - must be printed off (DOC) Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Nominations Death of a candidate Agents Agents This section of the guidance covers the appointment of election agents, the requirement to give public notice of the appointment of election agents and how an appointment can be revoked. You will also find guidance on the appointment of agents to attend postal vote openings, polling stations and the verification and count, and information on the secrecy and conduct requirements for attendance at these key electoral events. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Agents Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Nominations Appointment of election agent Appointment of election agent An election agent is the person responsible for the proper management of the candidate's election campaign and, in particular, for its financial management. Every candidate must have an election agent. The notice of the appointment of an election agent must be delivered to you by the latest time for the delivery of notices of withdrawals by 4pm on the last day for the delivery of nomination papers. We have produced an election agent notification form as part of the following set of nomination papers. 1 Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general

election (DOC) Can a candidate be their own agent? A candidate may appoint themselves as their own election agent. If no agent is appointed by the deadline for withdrawals, the candidate automatically becomes their own election agent. 2 A candidate also becomes their own agent if: they revoke their agent's appointment, or their agent dies, and a replacement is not appointed on the day of the death or on the following day 3 Election agent's office address The election agent must have an office address to which all claims, notices, legal notices and documents may be sent. This must be a physical address – PO boxes or similar mailboxes cannot be used. 4 The location of the office must be in one of the following locations: within the parliamentary constituency where the candidate is standing within a constituency which adjoins the constituency where the candidate is standing within Wales, within a Welsh county or county borough which is part of, or adjoins, the constituency where the candidate is standing within London, within a London borough which is part of, or adjoins, the constituency where the candidate is standing 5 The election agent's office address is often the same as their home address. Alternatively, it might be the local political party office or an office especially set up for the election. If the candidate gives you written notification of their appointment as their own election agent, they must give an office address within the qualifying area as defined in the bullet points above. Where a candidate acts as their own election agent as a result of not having appointed anybody else, the office address is deemed to be the address given on the statement of persons nominated, i.e. the one provided on the home address form. If that address is outside the relevant qualifying area as defined in the bullet points above, the office address is deemed to be the address of the person named in the statement of persons nominated as proposer. 6 1. Section 67(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S. 67(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. S. 70(1) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. S. 69(1) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. S. 69(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 6. S. 70(4) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 6 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Appointment of election agent Agents Publishing the notice of election agents Publishing the notice of election agents You must publish a notice setting out the election agent's name and address as soon as possible after you have been notified of the appointment. You should also include the full name of the candidate on this notice, and you could add any commonly used name in brackets, for completeness. The notice must be updated if any agent's appointment is revoked, or the agent dies, and the new agent's details published on the revised version. 1 Your privacy notice should make clear that you are required under electoral legislation to publish an election agent's name and address information in the notice of election agents. The notice serves a specific purpose, i.e. advising who will be a candidate's election agent, so once the election is over, and the opportunity to question that election has passed, they serve no further purpose. You should either remove the notice, or remove the personal data contained in the notice, once the petition deadline for the election has passed. Our data protection guidance covers the requirements of a privacy notice and document retention considerations. 1. Section 67(6) Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Publishing the notice of election agents Appointment of election agent Revoking the appointment of an election agent Revoking the appointment of an election agent Once an election agent has been appointed by a candidate they cannot resign from their role. Only the candidate may revoke the appointment. In this case the candidate would need to appoint a new election agent or would become their own agent. 1 If a

candidate is acting as their own election agent, irrespective of whether they became an agent as a result of not appointing one or because they had given you written notice of their own appointment, they can also revoke their own appointment and appoint a new agent. Wherever a candidate revokes the appointment of an election agent they must notify you in writing. 2 You must then publish a revised version of the notice of election agents. A candidate may revoke the appointment of an election agent at any time during the election period. Where possible, if an election agent is revoked but has already been involved in authorising expenditure or campaign materials, the candidate should obtain a declaration from their previous agent regarding any expenses which occurred during their time as agent, to support the candidate's submission of their final expenses return. 1. Section 70(3)

Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) 2. S. 67(3) and (4) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Revoking the appointment of an election agent](#) [Publishing the notice of election agents](#) [Appointment of sub-agents](#) [Appointment of sub-agents](#) An election agent in a county constituency may appoint sub-agents to act on their behalf. No sub-agents can be appointed in a borough (or burgh) constituency. 1

Election agents at a county constituency may appoint sub-agents for particular parts of the constituency, as long as those parts do not overlap. The agent can determine the parts into which they wish to sub-divide the constituency. 2 The office of the sub-agent must be in the area within they are appointed to act. 3 A sub-agent can do anything that the election agent is entitled to do within the area to which they are appointed. 4 The election agent must declare to you in writing the name, address and office address of each sub-agent they have appointed and the area in which they may act by the second working day before the day of the poll. You should include a form for the notification of appointment of sub-agents in your nomination packs. We have produced a form for the notification of appointment of sub-agents as part of the following set of nomination papers which you could use for this purpose. 5 Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election (DOC) The election agent can revoke the appointment of a sub-agent at any time. If a sub-agent dies or has their appointment revoked, the election agent may appoint a new sub-agent by declaring in writing the name, address, office address and area of appointment of the new sub-agent to you. Once the name, address, office address and area of appointment of a sub-agent have been declared to you, you must give public notice of these details. 6 1. Section

68(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) 2. S. 68(1) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) 3. S. 69(2) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#) 4. S. 68(2) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 4](#) 5. S. 68(3) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 5](#) 6. S. 68(4) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 6](#) Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Appointment of sub-agents](#) [Revoking the appointment of an election agent](#) [Postal, Polling and Counting Agents](#) [Postal, Polling and Counting Agents](#) Candidates, or their election agent, can appoint agents to observe the opening of postal votes, the conduct of the poll at polling stations and the verification and count of votes. You are responsible for receiving the notifications of appointment of these agents. 1 You will find more details on these agents in the guidance that follows. You are required to ensure that all appointed agents are given a copy of the following relevant secrecy requirements for opening of postal votes, the poll and the count which we have published on our website. 2 [Secrecy requirements - postal voting \(DOC\)](#) [Secrecy requirements - the poll \(DOC\)](#) [Secrecy requirements - count - S66](#) For guidance on revoking agent appointments and appointing new agents see [Revoking the appointment of an election agent](#) . 1.

Schedule 1 Rule 30 Representation of the People Act 1983, (RPA 1983) Regulation 69 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR (E&W) 2001) and Regulation 69 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (S) 2001) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S. 66 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Postal, Polling and Counting Agents Appointment of sub-agents Postal Voting agents Postal Voting agents Postal voting agents are permitted by law to observe the opening of the postal voters' ballot box, the opening of returned postal votes and the checking of signatures and dates of birth provided on returned postal voting statements. 1 You are required to give candidates at least 48 hours' notice of the time and place of any postal vote opening session and the number of agents a candidate may appoint to attend each opening. 2 You must be given written notice of the name and address of any postal voting agents before the start of any particular session that the agents are seeking to attend. The Commission has developed the following form for the notification of appointment of a postal voting agent. 3 Postal voting agent appointment form (DOC) Secrecy and conduct requirements Ballot papers will be kept face down throughout a postal vote opening session. You should supply all postal voting agents with the requirements of secrecy for the opening of postal votes. Secrecy requirements - postal voting (DOC) The key points are that: anyone attending an opening session must not attempt to see how individual ballot papers have been marked or keep a tally of how ballot papers have been marked anyone attending a postal vote opening must not attempt to look at identifying marks or numbers on ballot papers, disclose how any particular ballot paper has been marked or pass on any such information gained from the session. anyone found guilty of breaching these requirements can face an unlimited fine, or may be imprisoned for up to six months 1. Regulation 68(d) Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR E&W) 2001), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (S) 2001) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Reg. 80 RPR (E&W 2001) and Reg. 80 RPR (S) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Reg. 69 RPR (E&W) 2001 and Reg. 69 RPR (S) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Postal Voting agents Postal, Polling and Counting Agents Polling agents Polling agents Polling agents are entitled by law to access polling stations for the purpose of detecting personation. 1 They can also observe the procedures to be followed inside a polling station. You must be notified in writing of any polling agents that have been appointed by not later than five working days before the poll for their appointment to be in force for the poll. The Commission has developed the following form for the notification of appointment of a polling agent. 2 Polling agent appointment form (DOC) Limiting the number of agents in attendance There is no limit on the number of polling agents that may be appointed at a UK Parliamentary election. A polling agent can be appointed to a particular polling station or stations, or to all polling stations within the electoral area. The same polling agents may be appointed to attend more than one polling station. However, by law only one polling agent may be admitted at the same time to a polling station on behalf of the same candidate. 3 Secrecy and conduct requirements Anyone attending a polling station has a duty to maintain the secrecy of the ballot. You should supply all Polling Agents with the following requirements of secrecy for the poll. Secrecy requirements - the poll (DOC) In particular, the following information must not be disclosed: the name or electoral number of who has or has not voted the number or other unique identifying mark on the ballot paper Anyone attending a polling station must also not try to ascertain how a voter has voted or who they are about to vote for. A polling agent can mark off on

their copy of the register of electors those voters who have applied for ballot papers. If the polling agent leaves the polling station during the hours of polling, they will need to leave the marked copy of the register in the polling station to ensure that secrecy requirements are not breached. Any person found guilty of breaching the secrecy requirements can face an unlimited fine, or may be imprisoned for up to six months. Polling agents' seals cannot be attached to ballot boxes at the start of or during the poll. While a polling agent can observe the poll, they do not have to be present in a polling station for polling and related procedures to take place.

1. Schedule 1 Rule 30 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)

2. Schedule 1 Rule 30 RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#)

3. Schedule 1 Rule 32 RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#)

Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Polling agents](#)

[Postal Voting agents](#)

[Counting agents](#)

Counting agents Counting agents can be appointed to observe the verification and counting processes.

1 You are legally required to give appointed counting agents notice in writing of the time and place at which the verification and count will begin.

2 You must be notified in writing of the appointment of counting agents by not later than five working days before the poll for their appointment to be in force for the verification and count.

3 The Commission has developed the following form for the notification of appointment of a counting agent. [Counting agent appointment form \(DOC\)](#)

Limiting the number of agents in attendance You are permitted by law to limit the number of counting agents appointed. The number that may be appointed by each candidate must be the same and, unless there are special circumstances, must not be less than the number obtained by dividing the number of counting assistants (i.e. those staff counting the ballot papers) by the number of candidates.

4 When determining the maximum number of counting agents, each candidate should, as far as possible, be permitted to appoint sufficient numbers of counting agents to enable full and proper scrutiny of the verification and count processes. You should, however, consider any health and safety implications, including fire regulations for the verification and count venue, when deciding on maximum numbers of counting agents. For more details on who is permitted to attend the verification and count see our guidance on [Attendance at the verification and count](#).

Secrecy and conduct requirements Anyone attending the count has a duty to maintain the secrecy of the count. You should supply all Polling Agents with the following requirements of secrecy for the count.

Secrecy requirements - count - S66 In particular, anyone attending must not:

- ascertain or attempt to ascertain the number or other unique identifying mark on the back of any ballot paper
- communicate any information obtained at the count as to the candidate for whom any vote is given on any particular ballot paper

1. Schedule 1 Rule 30(1)(b) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)

2. Schedule 1 Rule 30 and 44 RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#)

3. Schedule 1 Rule 30(3)(b) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#)

4. Schedule 1 Rule 30 RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 4](#)

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[Book traversal links for Counting agents](#)

[Polling agents](#)

[Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Agents](#)

[Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Agents](#)

[Counting agent appointment form \(DOC\)](#)

[Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election \(DOC\)](#)

[Polling agent appointment form \(DOC\)](#)

[Postal voting agent appointment form \(DOC\)](#)

[Secrecy requirements - postal voting \(DOC\)](#)

[Secrecy requirements - the count](#)

[Secrecy requirements - the poll \(DOC\)](#)

Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Agents](#)

[Counting agents](#)

[Absent Voting](#)

[Absent Voting](#)

The effective management of the absent voting process is essential to ensure that absent voting is accessible and that electors are able to

exercise their vote as they have requested. This section includes guidance on the absent voting timetable, the key deadlines for the process and how and when electors can make changes to their existing absent voting arrangements ahead of an election. It also covers arrangements that should be put in place for proxy voting, and guidance for the issuing of postal votes, including how to quality assure the process. You will also find guidance on the processes that must be followed on the receipt of postal votes. It includes information on the postal vote opening process, who can attend postal vote opening sessions and the records you must keep as part of the process. Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Absent Voting Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - Agents](#)

[Absent voting timetable](#)

[Absent voting timetable](#)

You must issue postal votes to electors as soon as is practicable. 1 In practice, this means at any time after the details to be printed on the ballot papers have been confirmed, i.e. after the deadline for withdrawals, which is 4pm on the last day for the delivery of nomination papers. The early dispatch of postal votes will maximise the time available for electors – especially overseas and service voters – to receive, complete and return their postal votes. You can find more information in our guidance: [Issuing and distributing postal votes](#)

You may only issue a postal vote to someone who has been added to the electoral register and has made a successful application for a postal vote. The Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) is required to publish two interim election notices of alteration before publishing the final election notice of alteration on the fifth working day before the poll. 2 This supports the dispatch of postal votes at an early stage in the timetable to those electors who have applied to register and applied for a postal vote close to the registration deadline. More information is available in our guidance for EROs: [election notices of alteration](#) . If you are not also the ERO, you should liaise with them to obtain the postal voters' list and the postal proxy voters' list as soon as possible after the publication of the first interim election notice of alteration to include these electors in the initial dispatch of postal votes. This notice must be published on the same day as the deadline for the delivery of nomination papers. 3 You will also need to liaise with the ERO to obtain any subsequent updates once the second interim election notice of alteration and the final election notice of alteration have been published. You can find further information on interim notices of alteration in our guidance for EROs in England , Scotland and Wales . Our template election timetable for a UK Parliamentary general election and the timetable for by-elections also includes the relevant publication dates for these notices. [UKPGE Election timetable generic \(DOCX\)](#) [UKPE By election timetable generic \(DOCX\)](#) [Cross-boundary constituencies Cross boundary constituencies](#)

If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries you should liaise with the ERO(s) in the other authority/authorities to obtain the data you need. If there is a need for exchanging data electronically, you should ensure that a test of the process is carried out ahead of the first scheduled transfer. [Absent voting timetable](#)

[Deadlines for absent vote applications and requests for changes to existing arrangements](#)

The deadline for electors to submit new postal and postal proxy applications is 5pm, 11 working days before polling day. This is also the deadline: to cancel existing postal votes for electors to make changes (i.e. amending the delivery address) to any existing absent vote (i.e. postal, proxy and postal proxy) arrangements

If, however, an elector is an existing postal voter and has already returned their postal ballot paper, they cannot make changes after that time, even if this is before 5pm, 11 working days before polling day. 4 The deadline for new proxy applications (not postal proxy), excluding emergency proxy applications, is 5pm, 6

working days before polling day. 5 The deadline for emergency proxy applications is 5pm on polling day. 6 You can find more information in our guidance: voting by emergency proxy . This table summarises the deadlines for easy reference:

Application/Request	Deadline
Submit new postal and postal proxy vote applications	5pm, 11 working days before polling day
Cancel existing postal votes	5pm, 11 working days before polling day
Make changes to existing absent voting arrangements	5pm, 11 working days before polling day
New proxy (not postal proxy) applications	5pm, 6 working days before polling day
Emergency proxy applications	5pm, polling day

The ERO will provide you with the final lists of absent voters, i.e. the list of postal voters, the list of postal proxy voters and the list of proxies, after the deadline for applications has passed. The final lists of absent voters may not be available until after the registration determination deadline, which is six working days before the poll. This is because where a completed registration application is made by the deadline but the applicant's identity cannot be verified against DWP records or through local data matching, the ERO has until the determination deadline for applications to receive the required evidence from the applicant under the exceptions process and make a determination. Where the applicant has also applied for an absent vote by the relevant absent vote deadline, the absent vote cannot be granted until the registration application has been positively determined and the application appears on the electoral register.

1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations (RPR(E&W)) 2001 reg 71, RPR(Scotland) 2001 reg 71 ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)

2. Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA) section 13AB ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#)

3. RPA 1983 s13AB(5) ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#)

4. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 56 ■ [Back to content at footnote 4](#)

5. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 56, RPR(S) 2001 reg 56 ■ [Back to content at footnote 5](#)

6. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 56(3A), RPR(S) 2001 reg 56(3A) ■ [Back to content at footnote 6](#)

Last updated: 26 September 2023

[Book traversal links for Absent voting timetable](#)

[Absent Voting Changes to absent voting arrangements ahead of an election](#)

[Changes to absent voting arrangements ahead of an election](#)

The deadline for making changes to existing absent vote arrangements, or cancelling an existing postal vote, is 5pm, 11 working days before the poll. A person who is sent their postal vote early in the election timetable may receive it before this date, but subsequently decide they no longer wish to vote by post. They are still able to make changes to their absent voting arrangements to take effect at the election as long as their request is received by the deadline and they have not yet returned their postal ballot paper. You will need to have a system in place that will allow you to promptly identify if a postal ballot paper has already been returned. An elector who has received their postal ballot pack and who has already returned their completed postal ballot paper will not be allowed to cancel or make any changes to their absent voting arrangements for that election. Any elector who has already returned their postal ballot paper can still make a request to make changes to their absent vote arrangements but these changes will not take place until any future poll, unless the ballot paper has been returned as spoilt or lost before the deadline for changes has passed. This is also the case for an elector voting by proxy, where their proxy has a postal vote and has already voted on behalf of the elector by returning their completed postal vote. The ERO will administer the changes to any absent vote arrangements, and they must notify you whenever they have granted:

- 1 a postal vote cancellation
- a change from postal to proxy
- a change from proxy to postal
- an application for a postal ballot paper to be sent to a different address
- a cancellation of a proxy appointment in time to take effect at the election.

You should let the ERO know when postal ballot papers are dispatched as, in practice, it

will only be from that point forward and before the final deadline for cancellations and changes that the ERO would need to check whether a postal ballot paper has been returned and so whether it is permissible to allow an application for changes or a cancellation to take effect in time for the election. You will need to retrieve any ballot papers that have been received before the absent vote deadline and subsequently cancelled by the elector. You can find more information in our guidance on the retrieval of cancelled postal votes .

Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries you should liaise with the ERO(s) at the other authority/authorities to decide how any requests for changes to absent voting arrangements and information on returned postal ballot papers will be exchanged so that: the ERO knows whether a postal ballot paper has been received, and subsequently whether or not they can allow a request for changes to absent voting arrangements to take effect for the elections you can cancel the relevant postal ballot papers if the request has been allowed.

1. Representation of the People Act 1983 section 13B ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Changes to absent voting arrangements ahead of an election](#)

Absent voting timetable Proxy voting Proxy voting The ERO will provide you with a list of all electors who have, by 5pm, six working days before polling day, appointed a proxy to vote on their behalf. You must supply Presiding Officers with the relevant parts of this list of proxies. 1 A separate list will contain the details of postal proxies. The polling station register must be marked with an 'A' against the name of the elector, as any elector who has appointed a proxy and their proxy has applied to vote by post can no longer vote in the polling station.

2 Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries you will need to liaise with the ERO(s) at the other authority/authorities to obtain the list of all electors for the relevant parts of the constituency who have, by 5pm, six working days before polling day, appointed a proxy to vote on their behalf.

Proxy voting Restrictions on proxy voting A person may not have more than one appointed proxy at any time.

3 A person is not entitled to vote as proxy at the same UK Parliamentary election in any particular constituency on behalf of more than two electors who are not close relatives.

4 A person can additionally act as proxy for any number of the following close relatives: spouse, civil partner, parent, grandparent, brother, sister, child or grandchild. A proxy would be committing an offence if they voted on behalf of more than two electors who are not close relatives at the election.

5 1. Representation of the People Act 1983 section 13B ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) **2. RPA 2000 sch 4 para 6(8)** ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) **3. RPA 2000 sch 4 para 6** ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#) **4. RPA 1983 s61(4)** ■ [Back to content at footnote 4](#) **5. RPA 2000 sch 4 para 8** ■ [Back to content at footnote 5](#) Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Proxy voting](#)

Changes to absent voting arrangements ahead of an election **Emergency proxies** Emergency proxies An elector may find that they are unable to go to the polling station after the deadline for arranging an ordinary proxy has passed. An elector may appoint an emergency proxy to vote on their behalf at the polling station in certain circumstances: 1 in the case of a disability (whether a medical condition, illness or otherwise) arising after the deadline for ordinary proxy applications (i.e. after 5pm on the sixth working day before the poll) if they are a mental health patient detained under civil powers (i.e., who are not also detained offenders) if their occupation, service or employment means they cannot go to the polling station in person, provided that they only become aware of this fact after the deadline for

ordinary proxy applications (i.e. 5pm on the sixth working day before the poll) if they meet any of the conditions relating to emergency proxies on the grounds of voter identification after the deadline to apply for a Voter Authority Certificate or Anonymous Elector's Document (i.e. 5pm on the sixth working day before the poll). Further information can be found in our guidance for EROs in England, Scotland and Wales. Electors can apply for an emergency proxy after the deadline for normal proxy applications has passed (i.e. after 5pm on the sixth working day before the poll) up until 5pm on polling day. If you are not also the ERO, you should agree a method with them for communicating any additions to the list of proxies that result from the granting of emergency proxy applications. Cross-boundary constituencies

If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, you should agree the ERO(s) at the other authority/authorities a method for communicating any additions to the list of proxies that result from the granting of emergency proxy applications. Emergency proxies

Whenever an emergency proxy has been appointed, you should inform the appropriate polling station staff as soon as possible after the proxy has been appointed, and by any means available to you. Someone appointed as an emergency proxy will be required to produce photographic ID at the polling station to prove their identity before they can be issued with a ballot paper. Wherever possible, the ERO should provide the proxy of any voter whose application has been accepted with a letter authorising them to act as a proxy, which should include details of the person on whose behalf they are voting. The ERO should advise the proxy to take that authorisation with them when they go to vote and to hand it to polling station staff. If such a letter is provided at the polling station, polling station staff should mark it to show that the proxy has been issued with a ballot paper and the marked letter should then be retained with the list of proxies. The ERO should also, where possible, provide a supplementary list of proxies which can be issued to the relevant polling station and added to the list originally supplied. The agreed method for communicating additions to the list of proxies on polling day should be covered at the training session for polling station staff. Further information on training polling station staff can be found in our guidance on staffing and training. You could ask polling station inspectors to liaise with the electoral registration office regarding emergency proxy applications granted on polling day and should advise them of the procedures to be followed. You can find more information in our guidance on emergency proxies.

1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 section 56(3A), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 s56(3A) and (3B) ■ Back to content at footnote 1

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Emergency proxies

Proxy voting

Issuing and distributing postal votes

Issuing and distributing postal votes

As part of your planning for the delivery of key processes, you will have made decisions on the process for issuing postal votes and how you will distribute these. This section includes further guidance relating to the issue and delivery of postal votes, including re-issuing and cancelling vote packs, as well as guidance to quality assure the process. Last updated: 30 March 2023

Book traversal links for Issuing and distributing postal votes

Emergency proxies

Planning for the issue of postal votes

Planning for the issue of postal votes

Who must be sent a postal vote? You must send a postal vote to: any elector who appears on the postal voters' list for the election any proxy who appears on the postal proxy voters' list for the election

Timing of the issuing of postal votes

Postal votes must be issued as soon as practicable. 1 In practice, this means that, once the deadline for the withdrawal of candidates has passed, postal ballot papers should be issued to

existing electors who have successfully applied for a postal vote. You should put arrangements in place to ensure that electors receive their postal ballot papers as soon as possible and prioritise any postal votes that may need to be sent overseas in order to maximise the time that postal voters have to receive, complete and return their postal vote. The ERO must publish two interim election notices of alteration before publishing the final election notice of alteration on the fifth working day before the poll. If you are not also the ERO, you should liaise with them to ensure you obtain the information on any new electors who have applied for a postal vote as soon as possible so that you can arrange for the necessary additional postal votes to be sent urgently. You can find further information on interim notices of alteration in our guidance for EROs in England, Scotland and Wales. Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, you should liaise with the ERO(s) at the other local authority/authorities as soon as possible to ensure you obtain the relevant data for any new electors who have applied for a postal vote.

Planning for the issue of postal votes For more information on timings see our guidance on the absent voting timetable. 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 regulation 71, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 reg 71 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Planning for the issue of postal votes Issuing and distributing postal votes The issuing process The issuing process The processes to be followed when issuing postal ballot packs are provided for in legislation. 1

Corresponding number list You must produce a corresponding number list at postal vote issuing sessions. The corresponding number list is prescribed and must contain the ballot paper number and unique identifying mark of all ballot papers to be issued to that elector. 2 When the ballot paper is issued, the elector number must be marked on the corresponding number list beside the ballot paper number and unique identifying mark. 3 New lists and associated packets are required at every issue. The list could be printed single-sided and cut at the point where the last ballot paper was issued at any particular issue of postal ballot packs. The remaining corresponding number list can then be used at any further issuing sessions and for the issue of replacement postal ballot papers. The corresponding number list relating to the ballot papers that have been issued must be sealed in a packet as soon as practicable after each issue of postal ballot packs, this can only be opened and inspected by the order of a court. 4 The postal ballot pack The number of the postal ballot paper(s) must be included on the postal voting statement to be sent with the ballot paper(s). 5 The address to which the postal ballot pack should be sent is the address shown in the relevant postal voters' list. In the case of a postal proxy, this is the address shown in the postal proxy voters' list. In the case of an anonymous elector, the address can be found in the records of granted applications. Our guidance on the production of postal voting stationery contains information on the content required for the postal ballot pack. Marking the polling station registers To indicate that an elector is entitled to vote by post and must not be given an ordinary ballot paper at a polling station, the polling station register must be marked with an 'A' using the information contained in the postal voters' list and the postal proxy voters' list. A mark must be placed in the postal voters' list (or the postal proxy voters' list as the case may be) to show that a postal ballot pack has been issued. You should maintain a clear audit trail of the issue of postal ballot packs. As part of this, you should ensure that the number of postal votes issued is accurately recorded at the end of each issuing session and when issuing replacement postal ballot packs.

These numbers will be required for the completion of the statement as to postal ballot papers. This table summarises the issuing process:

Order Action to take

Step 1 Read out the name and address of the postal voter from the postal/proxy postal voters list and check that those details appear on the outgoing envelope.

Step 2 Read out the ballot paper number listed. Check the numbers are the same on: the back of the relevant ballot paper the postal vote statement the ballot paper envelope

Step 3 Make up the postal ballot pack into the outgoing envelope by including: the ballot paper(s) envelope 'A' the postal vote statement the return envelope (envelope B) any additional instructions

Step 4 Mark the postal voters / proxy voters list to show you have completed the postal vote pack.

Step 5 Close the envelopes as requested by the supervisor. Do not seal them unless instructed.

Who can attend the postal vote issuing process? In addition to you and your staff, Commission representatives and accredited observers are entitled to attend the issuing process.

6 If you have outsourced the postal vote issuing process, you should ensure that these people are able to access the premises of the company conducting the issue. Anyone attending a postal vote issue session, including your staff, must be provided with a copy of the relevant secrecy provisions.

7 Secrecy requirements - postal voting (DOC)

1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR (E&W)) regulation 72, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (S)) regulation 72 ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 72(2), RPR(S) 2001 reg 72(2) ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. RPR (E&W) 2001 Reg 72(2), RPR (S) 2001 Reg 72(2) ■ Back to content at footnote 3

4. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 75(1), RPR(S) 2001 reg 75(1) ■ Back to content at footnote 4

5. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 72(4), RPR(S) 2001 reg 72(4) ■ Back to content at footnote 5

6. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 67, RPR(S) 2001 reg 67 ■ Back to content at footnote 6

7. Representation of the People Act 1983 section 66 ■ Back to content at footnote 7

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for The issuing process

Planning for the issue of postal votes

Quality assuring the issuing process

You are responsible for ensuring that the issuing of postal votes is carried out in accordance with legislation, regardless of whether you have outsourced the process. The contents of the postal vote pack are prescribed and you should ensure that all the relevant details have been included on those materials. You can find more information on what must be included in the postal vote pack and how to quality assure the production process in our guidance:

Production of postal voting stationery. You should also ensure that you have arrangements in place which enable you to quality-assure the end-to-end postal vote issuing process including: where you have outsourced the issuing process, having a member of staff in attendance when postal votes are being issued, with knowledge of the agreed specifications checking the correct details are on the stationery and that packs are properly collated with all required elements checking the packs at the start and end of polling districts carrying out random spot checks with a ratio of at least two packs per 250 postal ballot packs within polling districts so a representative cross-section can be checked across your area and within each batch checking that packs being sent to overseas addresses contain a reply envelope that is capable of being used overseas keeping an audit trail of the stationery that has been checked and processes that have been undertaken

You should pay particular attention to checking that: the ballot paper number on the reverse of the ballot paper exactly matches the ballot paper number on the accompanying postal voting statement the name of the elector on the postal voting statement matches the name of the elector on the outgoing envelope all required items are in the outgoing envelope

If you have outsourced the issuing process, discussions to facilitate these checks should occur

at the time the contract is negotiated and be reflected in it. Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Quality assuring the issuing process](#)

[The issuing process](#)

[Issuing postal votes to overseas addresses](#)

[Issuing postal votes to overseas addresses](#)

Postal ballot packs that are to be sent overseas should be prioritised in order to allow as much time as possible for the ballot pack to reach the elector and to be completed and returned. As part of your preparations for the issue of postal votes, you should agree with your printers a process that will enable you to do this. Postal votes going overseas should be sent via air mail (or by the British Forces Post Office for relevant service voters) in order to allow the maximum possible time for postal votes to be received, completed and returned. Postal ballot packs to be sent overseas should be sorted and identified to the mail service provider so that they can be sent by the appropriate mail service. You should liaise with Royal Mail about the cost of postage for sending items overseas in order to ensure that the correct postage is included on all outgoing postal ballot packs. You must include an envelope to facilitate the return of the postal ballot pack, 1 but for items sent overseas, the envelope should not include UK return postage as this will not be sufficient for the return of the postal ballot pack to the UK and could result in a delay to the return of the completed postal ballot pack. Instead, you should put in place arrangements with Royal Mail for an international business response licence to be used on all return envelopes included in postal ballot packs which are sent to overseas addresses in order to facilitate the timely return of completed postal ballot packs from outside the UK. Where it may not be realistic for a postal ballot pack to be dispatched, completed and returned before the close of poll, the ERO should make the elector aware of this fact and advise the elector to appoint a proxy as an alternative. It is, of course, the choice of the elector as to which method of voting they prefer, but it is important that electors are fully advised of the circumstances surrounding their choice so that they can make an informed decision.

1. Regulation 76(3) Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 and Regulation 76(3) Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)

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[Book traversal links for Issuing postal votes to overseas addresses](#)

[Quality assuring the issuing process](#)

[Issuing postal votes to anonymous electors](#)

[Issuing postal votes to anonymous electors](#)

Postal ballot packs sent to anonymously registered electors must be sent in an envelope or covering that does not disclose that the elector is registered anonymously.

1 You should send postal ballot packs to anonymously registered electors in a plain outgoing envelope. The postal voting statement must also omit the elector's name.

2 As part of your preparations for the issue of postal votes, you should agree with your printers a process that will enable you to do this. The ERO's records of granted applications will include the address to which the anonymous elector has requested that their postal vote should be sent.

1. Section 9B(8) Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#)

2. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 regulation 66, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 reg 66. The latest version of the postal voting statement at UK Parliamentary elections can be found in The Representation of the People (England and Wales) (Description of Electoral Registers and Amendment) Regulations 2013 and, in Wales, should be read alongside The Parliamentary Elections (Welsh Forms) (Amendment) Order 2015 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#)

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[Book traversal links for Issuing postal votes to anonymous electors](#)

[Issuing postal votes to overseas addresses](#)

[Subsequent issues of postal ballot packs](#)

[Subsequent issues of postal ballot packs](#)

Following the initial issue of postal ballot packs, subsequent issues of postal

ballot packs will be required where electors have applied to vote by post close to the absent voting deadline which is 5pm, 11 working days before polling day. 1 Any subsequent postal ballot pack issue is likely to be at an already busy time in the election timetable, so it is important that you have the necessary arrangements in place to issue and deliver subsequent postal ballot packs as quickly and efficiently as possible. You should ensure that: you have sufficient staff to maintain oversight of the overall process, whether you are issuing postal votes in-house, or using an external provider your printer is aware of the timings of data transfers and, where applicable, dispatch of postal ballot packs you have processes in place to perform ongoing quality assurance monitoring of the production and delivery of your subsequent postal ballot pack issues Special arrangements for ad hoc issues of postal ballot packs You should put a mechanism in place to ensure that you are able to carry out additional unscheduled issues. For example, when you become aware that one or more electors are going to be on holiday or away on business by the time of the next scheduled issue of postal votes you should, as far as is practicable, issue postal ballot packs outside of your scheduled issue to those individual electors. 1.

Regulation 56 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 and Regulation 56 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 ■ Back to

content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Subsequent issues of postal ballot packs Issuing postal votes to anonymous electors Options for delivering postal ballot packs Options for delivering postal ballot packs You will need to put arrangements in place for the delivery of postal ballot packs. You have a choice of two methods: 1 by hand by post Whichever method you choose, you should ensure that you have a detailed plan covering all actions required to achieve the successful delivery of postal ballot packs. You can find more information in our guidance: Working with mail delivery partners . As part of your integrity planning for the election, you should inform your police single point of contact (SPOC) of the date you will start dispatching postal ballot packs to electors. This will mark the date from which there is a higher risk of postal voting fraud and they should build this into their own planning. You can find more information in our guidance:

Maintaining integrity . 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales)

Regulations 2001 regulation 76, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 regulation 76 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book

traversal links for Options for delivering postal ballot packs Subsequent issues of postal ballot packs Delivering postal ballot packs by hand Delivering postal ballot packs by hand If you decide to deliver postal votes by hand, you should plan for how this will work in practice. You should appoint sufficient staff to ensure that postal ballot packs are received by postal voters as soon as possible to maximise the time postal voters have to receive, complete and return their postal vote. You should ensure that staff are aware of data protection considerations, and should consider requiring staff to confirm in writing at the point of recruitment, that they will abide by your data protection policy. You should also have in place a mechanism for monitoring the delivery of postal ballot packs, with a view to ensuring that they have been delivered across the whole of the constituency and to agreed timeframes. This may include requiring delivery staff to fill in log sheets, having supervisors carry out spot-checks, and monitoring any unusually low returns of completed postal ballots by polling districts. Planning for ad-hoc deliveries by hand There may be circumstances where you will need to issue postal ballot packs by hand, even where the majority of your packs have been delivered by post, for example when replacing lost or spoilt postal ballot packs, or when conducting a subsequent or ad hoc issue

of a small number of packs. You should plan for how this will work in practice, including how you will ensure that these postal ballot packs can be printed and delivered at short notice. Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Delivering postal ballot packs by hand](#) [Options for delivering postal ballot packs](#) [Delivering postal ballot packs by post](#) [Delivering postal ballot packs by post](#)

You may choose to manage the supply of your postal vote packs to a delivery partner directly or have this managed by your print supplier. You may use Royal Mail or any other commercial delivery firm for the delivery of postal votes. You can find more information in our guidance: [Working with mail delivery partners](#) . [Options for delivery](#)

If you are using Royal Mail to deliver your postal votes, you should put in place arrangements for the relevant licenses and Business Reply numbers as soon as possible and confirm that your proposed stationery meets their specifications in order to avoid any potential delays at the time when your postal ballot packs are due to be distributed to electors. If you are using a commercial delivery firm, you should make similar arrangements as appropriate. Your contingency planning should address how you would issue and receive any returned postal ballot packs in the event that Royal Mail or the commercial delivery firm you have contracted are unable to deliver the postal ballot packs, for example, due to industrial action. If you are using Royal Mail to deliver your postal votes, you should ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of Royal Mail's best practice guidance on postal voting, [Managing Postal Voting](#) .

[Quality assuring the despatch process](#)

You should make arrangements for the secure transfer of the postal ballot packs from your printer to Royal Mail or your chosen delivery firm. You should ensure that a clear procedure and audit trail is in place for transferring postal ballot packs. You must count the total number of outgoing envelopes and arrange delivery of the envelopes to your delivery contractor along with a receipt showing the total number of postal ballot packs in that batch. 1 This receipt should be endorsed by Royal Mail or your delivery firm to acknowledge that they have received the batch prior to despatch. If your printing supplier is despatching materials to electors on your behalf, it is important that you continue to liaise with them once final sign-off of all printed and filled material is completed and it is ready for despatch. You should ensure that you get confirmation from your print supplier once despatch has begun, confirmation of how many packs have been or will be despatched per day and an update on how long it will take for the despatch to be completed. You should ask your print supplier for a copy of the postal dockets for each despatch for adding to your formal audit trail of the process. These dockets should detail the number of items despatched per day, and confirm the postal services used. Photos/scanned images of the dockets will suffice for these purposes. If you have agreed with your print supplier that down stream access (DSA) providers will be used as part of the despatch and delivery process, you should get updates from your delivery contractor on the progress of the delivery throughout. You should have in place a mechanism for monitoring the delivery of postal ballot packs, with a view to ensuring that they have been delivered across the whole of the constituency and to agreed timeframes. All of the measures above will help to identify possible issues that may have arisen with regards to despatch, feed into any subsequent evaluation of contractor performance, and enable you to provide information to voters on dates that they should expect to receive material through your social media channels and call centres as appropriate. [Quality assurance measures for monitoring delivery](#)

If possible, you should have arrangements in place to track deliveries in order to assist with responding to any enquiries from electors regarding the delivery of their postal ballot pack. You should also ensure you monitor the level of queries

from electors being received through all channels as this will help to highlight any issues being experienced with the delivery of materials in practice. You should monitor any unusually low returns of completed postal ballots by polling districts, as that may be an indication of delivery issues. You should also ensure that you have clear methods of communication to enable any issues or queries to be addressed quickly. You can find more information on quality assurance in our guidance on managing contractors .

1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 regulation 76(2), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 reg 76(2) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 20 June 2023

Book traversal links for Delivering postal ballot packs by post Delivering postal ballot packs by hand Re-issuing postal ballot packs Re-issuing postal ballot packs It is possible to re-issue postal ballot packs: 1 to replace a spoilt postal ballot paper/papers and/or postal voting statement to replace a lost or not received postal ballot pack to correct a procedural error You will find guidance on the process to be followed for each type of reissue in the following pages.

1. Regulations 77, 78 and 78A Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 and regs 77, 78 and 78A Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Re-issuing postal ballot packs Delivering postal ballot packs by post Procedure for re-issuing spoilt postal votes Procedure for re-issuing spoilt postal votes If a person spoils their postal ballot paper and/or postal voting statement, it is possible for them to obtain a replacement postal ballot pack. Replacements can be issued up until 5pm on polling day.

1 All parts of the postal vote pack must be returned before a replacement can be issued, regardless of whether or not these have been spoilt. 2 This includes: the spoilt postal ballot paper or the spoilt postal voting statement along with any remaining ballot papers or postal voting statement return envelope 'B' ballot paper envelope 'A' A new postal ballot pack can then be issued to the elector. The legislation requires that any returned spoilt ballot papers and postal voting statements must be cancelled and sealed in a packet for spoilt postal ballot papers, even if only one of them has actually been spoiled. 3 In certain circumstances you can cancel a postal vote which is considered spoilt, even if it has been returned to the RO. In this case, the spoilt ballot paper and postal voting statement must be retrieved and sealed as described above 4 . If the request for a replacement postal ballot pack is made between 5pm on the day before polling day and 5pm on polling day itself the replacement postal vote may only be issued to the elector if the spoilt documents are returned by hand. 4 In such cases, the issue of a replacement can also only be made by hand. You must put in place systems to enable you to issue replacements up to 5pm on polling day. 5 You will need to give particular consideration to this if you have outsourced the issue of postal votes. You should consider whether or not particular arrangements need to be put in place for disabled electors when making arrangements to re-issue spoilt ballot papers, as there may be some electors who are unable to attend the elections office due to disability. Record keeping for spoilt postal ballot papers 6 The elector's name and electoral number must be added to the list of spoilt postal ballot papers to show that the spoilt postal vote has been cancelled. The name must not, however, be added if the elector is registered anonymously. The ballot paper number of the replacement ballot paper must also be added to the list. In the case of a postal proxy, the name and address of the proxy must be added to the list alongside the other details. This table summarises the procedure for re-issuing spoilt postal votes: Step Action to take Step

1 Before taking the next steps, it is good practice to check if the postal pack has

been marked as returned on the postal voters or proxy postal voters list - in this case refer to retrieval of cancelled ballot papers

Step 2 Ask for the return of the complete postal pack

Step 3 Issue a new postal ballot pack (ballot paper(s), postal voting statement and relevant envelopes) to the elector

If the request is made after 5pm on the day before polling day, the replacement pack may only be handed to the elector

Step 4 Cancel any returned spoilt ballot papers and postal voting statements

Step 5 Seal the cancelled documents in a packet for spoilt postal ballot papers and add details to the list of cancelled postal ballot papers

Step 6 Add the name* and electoral number of the elector and the number of the replacement ballot paper(s) to the list of spoilt postal ballot papers. For postal proxies, also add the proxy name and address. *Exclude the name of anonymously registered electors. For the purposes of collating data for the statement of postal ballot papers (Form K), you should

■ also add the details of any spoilt ballot papers which have been cancelled to the list of all cancelled postal ballot papers (see our guidance on record keeping for cancelled ballot papers).

1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)) regulation 77 and 78, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) reg 77 and 78 ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 77, RPR(S) 2001 reg 77 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 77, RPR(S) 2001 reg 77 ■ Back to content at footnote 3

4. RPR (E&W) 2001 regs. 56(5A), 77(6) and 86A , RPR (S) 2001 regs. 56(5A), 77(6) and 86A ■ Back to content at footnote 4

a b 5. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 77(3), RPR(S) 2001 reg 77(3) ■ Back to content at footnote 5

6. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 77(8), RPR(S) 2001 reg 77(8) ■ Back to content at footnote 6

7. RPR E&W) 2001 reg 91(1)(b), RPR(S) 2001 reg 91(1)(b) ■ Back to content at footnote 7

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Procedure for re-issuing spoilt postal votes

Re-issuing postal ballot packs

Procedure of re-issuing lost/not received postal votes

Procedure of re-issuing lost/not received postal votes

Where a voter claims either to have lost or not to have received their postal ballot paper, postal voting statement, or envelopes 'A' and/or 'B', it is possible for a replacement postal ballot pack to be issued from 4 working days before polling day up until 5pm on polling day.

1 The voter must apply in person and the replacement pack may only be issued by hand

2 if the request for a replacement postal ballot pack is made between 5pm on the day before polling day and 5pm on polling day itself. You must re-issue a postal ballot pack if you are satisfied as to the postal voter's identity and have no reason to doubt that they have lost or did not receive their original postal ballot pack.

3 To establish the postal voter's identity, a proportionate approach should be adopted that seeks to use some proof of identity that can be easily verified by staff, but that is not too onerous for the elector. Legislation does not prescribe which forms of ID are required but the RO must be satisfied of the elector's identity.

4 For more information, see our guidance on proof of identity recommendations for reissuing postal votes . You should consider whether or not particular arrangements need to be put in place for those electors who are unable to attend the elections office in person, for example due to disability or being overseas. For example, you could consider accepting scanned copies of proof of identity listed in the examples in the next section via email, or utilising video-calling technology. If not all parts of the postal ballot pack have been lost or not received, the voter must return those documents that they do have. You are then required to immediately cancel those documents.

5 Voters may telephone your office to enquire about a replacement postal ballot pack if their postal vote has failed to arrive. If this is the case, your staff should advise about the procedure for re-issuing and explain what proof of identity they will be asked to produce before a

replacement postal ballot pack will be issued. Record keeping for lost/not received postal ballot papers

6 Where you re-issue a postal vote due to it being lost or not received, you must add the elector's name and elector number to the list of lost postal ballot papers. The name must not, however, be added if the elector is registered anonymously. The ballot paper number of the replacement ballot paper must also be added to the list. In the case of a postal proxy, the name and address of the proxy must be added to the list alongside the other details. This table summarises the procedure for re-issuing lost or not received postal votes:

Step Action to take

Step 1 There are no provisions to retrieve a postal ballot paper which reported lost / not received, but before taking the next steps it is good practice to check if the postal pack has been marked as returned on the postal voters or proxy postal voters list

Step 2 Ensure you are satisfied as to the postal voter's identity by requiring proof of identification

Step 3 Where an elector has lost only part of their postal ballot pack, the remaining parts must be returned when applying for a replacement. Returned parts must be cancelled, sealed in the packed for lost postal ballot papers and details added to the list of cancelled postal ballot papers

Step 4 Issue a new postal ballot pack (ballot paper(s), postal voting statement and relevant envelopes) to the elector

If the request is made after 5pm on the day before polling day, the replacement pack may only be handed to the elector

Step 5 Add the name* and electoral number of the elector and the number of the replacement ballot paper(s) to the list of lost postal ballot papers

For postal proxies, also add the proxy name and address

*Exclude the name of anonymously registered electors

For the purposes of collating data for the statement of postal ballot papers (Form K), you should also add the details of any lost ballot papers which have been cancelled to the list of all cancelled postal ballot papers. For more information see our guidance on record keeping for cancelled ballot papers .

7 1. Regulation 78 Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)), Regulation 78 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 78(3A), RPR(S) 2001 reg 78(3A) ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 78(3), RPR(S) 2001 reg 78(3) ■ Back to content at footnote 3

4. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 78(3)(a) ■ Back to content at footnote 4

5. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 78 (2A) and (2B), RPR(S) 2001 reg 78 (2A) and (2B) ■ Back to content at footnote 5

6. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 78(4), RPR(S) 2001 reg 78(4) ■ Back to content at footnote 6

7. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 78, RPR(S) 2001 reg 78 ■ Back to content at footnote 7

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Procedure of re-issuing lost/not received postal votes

Procedure for re-issuing spoilt postal votes

Proof of identity recommendations for reissuing postal votes

Proof of identity recommendations for reissuing postal votes

You should consider what process you will follow when determining how you will want to be satisfied as to the identity of an elector seeking to be issued with a replacement postal ballot pack, where the original has been lost or has not been received. This section provides a set of recommendations regarding proof of identity.

Recommendation 1 – Primary proofs of identity

One primary proof of identity should be provided before a replacement postal ballot pack is issued. This should be an official document that includes a photograph of the elector, together with the elector's name. The two most secure examples are: passport photocard driving licence

Other documents may be acceptable as primary proof, as long as they have a sealed photograph. Examples include: local bus pass student card issued by a recognised further or higher education body identity card issued by a recognised employer

Some electors may not be able to produce photographic identification. In these circumstances, it is recommended that they should be asked

to provide two examples drawn from the list of secondary proofs as listed below.

Recommendation 2 – Secondary proofs of identity If you still have any doubt about the identity of an elector requesting a replacement postal ballot pack, a secondary proof of identity could be sought. If an elector cannot produce a primary proof of identity, two secondary proofs of identity could be requested. Secondary proofs of identity include: full driving licence (without photograph) council tax payment book or recent council tax bill council or social landlord rent book recent rent receipts or tenancy agreement allowance, benefits or pension book issued by the Department for Work and Pensions cheque book, cheque card or National Savings book recent bank or building society statement (not a store card statement) recent utility bill (two different ones are preferable; not a mobile phone bill) P45 correspondence from a government department identity card issued by a member state of the European Union/European Economic Area, travel document issued by the Home Office, or certificate of naturalisation or registration letter (attested statement) from a responsible person such as a solicitor, doctor, minister of religion, magistrate, teacher, hostel manager, social worker, district nurse, midwife or other responsible person, which says that they know the elector and can confirm their name and address. You may wish to include the elector's landlord or tenant in this category, and possibly stipulate that they are on the electoral register National Health Service medical card or National Insurance card birth, adoption, marriage, civil partnership, divorce or statutory declaration certificates (these should preferably have been issued within six months of the event to which they refer and not be replacements) You should also consider the following points: for added security, originals, not photocopies, of the proof of identity should be produced where possible the evidence provided by the voter should show a clear link between the name on the identifying document and the current entry on the electoral register birth certificates are not absolute proof of identity and so the voter may be asked to provide additional evidence to allow their identity to be checked where utility bills or bank statements are provided, they should be recent (i.e., issued within the last three months) bank or credit cards should be checked against the voter's signature before an attestation is sought, the voter should be advised that some signatories may charge a fee for the service you should state that proof of identity will not be retained and that the documents will be treated confidentially and originals will be returned Data protection legislation does not set out any specific maximum periods for retention of personal data, but it states that personal data processed for any purpose shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose. 1 1. Article 5(1)(c) General Data Protection Regulations 2016 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Proof of identity recommendations for reissuing postal votes Procedure of re-issuing lost/not received postal votes Procedure for re-issuing as a result of a procedural error Procedure for re-issuing as a result of a procedural error If you have issued incorrect or incomplete postal ballot packs in error, you may be able to re-issue postal ballot packs using your powers to correct a procedural error. 1 Depending on the circumstances, you will need to decide whether to re-issue some or all of the postal ballot packs. For example, if an error in collation affected a certain range of packs, only those packs would need to be re-issued. Decisions about re-issuing as a result of a procedural error should be made on a case-by-case basis. In each case, consideration should be given to the impact that the error and any action to correct it could have on electors. For example, you will need to ensure that any action will rectify the error and not cause unnecessary confusion or result in a different error. Any decision to take action to rectify a

procedural error should be made following legal advice. You should document both the error and any corrective action taken in case there is a challenge to the election and a need to claim against insurance. Whatever action is taken, you should ensure that any communications to those voters who are affected clearly explain the error and the steps that you are taking to remedy it. You should also notify candidates and agents of the error and your intended corrective action as soon as possible. By being transparent about the problem and the solution you will minimise the risk of a loss of confidence in the administration of the election. See our guidance on Breach of official duty and power to correct procedural errors for more information on your power to correct procedural errors. When considering using this power, you should contact your local Commission team, who may be able to provide further tailored support to you. Record keeping for reissuing after a procedural error

When a postal vote has been re-issued as a result of a procedural error, the original ballot paper must be cancelled, added to the list of cancelled ballot papers, and must not be allowed to go forward to the count. 2 1. Section 46 Electoral Administration Act 2006 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Regulation 78A Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, reg 78A Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Procedure for re-issuing as a result of a procedural error Proof of identity recommendations for reissuing postal votes Cancelling postal ballot packs Cancelling postal ballot packs As postal ballot packs must be issued as soon as practicable to electors, there may be circumstances where a person you have already sent a postal ballot paper to subsequently applies to the ERO to cancel their postal vote, or make any changes to their absent voting arrangements, within time for the changes to be able to take effect at the election(s). However, a postal ballot paper that has already been returned to the RO cannot be cancelled 1 Our ERO guidance in England , Wales and Scotland contains further information on changing or cancelling postal votes at an election. If you are not also the ERO, you need to arrange how you will liaise with them, so that any changes to absent voting arrangements can be communicated to you in a timely manner and you know which ballot papers need to be cancelled. Upon notification you must immediately cancel any postal ballot paper that has been issued to such an elector or postal proxy, and add the details of the cancelled ballot paper to the list kept for that purpose (see our guidance on record keeping for cancelled postal votes). 2 You should consider how to manage the process of removal of those packs from any postal vote batches not yet despatched from your printer. Where the change to the absent voting arrangements relates only to the address to which the ballot paper should be sent, you must, in addition to cancelling the original postal ballot paper issue a replacement postal ballot pack to the new address. 3 You must also cancel any lost or spoilt postal ballot papers you have had to replace (see our guidance on re-issuing spoilt postal votes and lost/not received postal votes). 4 You need to maintain an audit trail of all the cancellations, including how your software system can be used to log all cancellations to enable you to produce the required list of cancelled postal ballot papers (see our guidance on record keeping for cancelled ballot papers) and identify any postal ballot papers that have been cancelled but have been returned and so need to be retrieved. Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries, the ERO(s) at the other authority/authorities will notify you where a person who has already been sent a postal ballot paper/papers subsequently applies to them to cancel their postal vote, or to make any changes to their absent voting arrangements. You must

immediately cancel any postal ballot paper that has been issued to such an elector or postal proxy. 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)) regulation 56(5A), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) reg 56(5A) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPR(E&W) 2001 Regulation 78A, RPR(S) 2001 reg 78A ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 78A, RPR(S) 2001 reg 78A ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 77 and 78, RPR(S) 2001 reg 77 and 78 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 13 September 2023

Book traversal links for Cancelling postal ballot packs Procedure for re-issuing as a result of a procedural error Record keeping for cancelled ballot papers Record keeping for cancelled ballot papers You must record the details of all cancelled postal ballot papers on one list. You must also make separate lists for spoilt, lost and cancelled papers containing the details outlined under the headings below:

List of spoilt ballot papers The list of spoilt ballot papers must contain: 1 the name and number of the elector as stated in the register (or, in the case of an elector who has an anonymous entry, only their electoral number) where the postal voter whose ballot paper is spoilt is a proxy, the postal proxy's name and address the number of the replacement postal ballot paper

List of lost ballot papers The list of lost ballot papers must contain: 2 the name and number of the elector as stated in the register (or, in the case of an elector who has an anonymous entry, only their electoral number) where the postal voter whose ballot paper is lost is a proxy, the postal proxy's name and address the number of the replacement postal ballot paper

List of cancelled postal ballot papers as a result of any change to absent voting arrangements after a postal vote has been sent This list of cancelled postal ballot papers must include: 3 the name and number of the elector as stated in the register (or, in the case of an elector who has an anonymous entry, only their electoral number) where the postal voter whose ballot paper is cancelled is a proxy, the postal proxy's name and address the number of the postal ballot papers cancelled the number of the replacement postal ballot papers

The contents of any postal ballot pack that has been cancelled, including any envelopes, must be made into a packet and sealed. The seal must only be opened to include additional cancelled documents in the packet.

4 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)) regulation 77(8), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) reg 77(8) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPR 2001 (E&W) reg 78(4), RPR(S) 2001 reg 78(4) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. RPR 2001 (E&W) reg 78A(3), RPR(S) 2001 reg 78A(3) ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. RPR 2001 (E&W) reg 78A(2)(c), RPR(S) 2001 reg 78A(2)(c) ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Record keeping for cancelled ballot papers Cancelling postal ballot packs Retrieval of cancelled postal votes Retrieval of cancelled postal votes Where a postal ballot paper has been cancelled, you must retrieve both the postal voting statement and the ballot paper, if they have been returned, so that they do not go forward to the count. There are no provisions to retrieve a postal ballot paper that has been reported as lost / not received postal ballot paper . You must ensure that the postal ballot box is resealed in the presence of any agents present once cancelled postal ballot papers have been retrieved from the postal ballot box. 1 Cancelling postal votes that have been returned 2 You should make arrangements for how you will deal with cancellations after postal packs have been issued and returned to you, including: how you will be able to retrieve and cancel any postal ballot papers and postal voting statements that are going through or have already gone through the postal vote opening process how you will explain what is happening to candidates and agents present at an opening session at which you need to retrieve and

cancel a postal ballot paper This table summarises the steps you should take for managing the retrieval of cancelled postal votes: Steps Actions to take Step 1 During an opening session, retrieve the postal voting statement from the appropriate packet or box Any retrieval of documents must be done in full view of those who are entitled to be present at the postal vote opening. You must show them the ballot paper numbers on any cancelled documents Step 2 Open the relevant postal ballot box and retrieve the ballot paper You should organise a system of batching postal ballot papers to aid the retrieval of any cancelled postal votes Step 3 Mark the retrieved documents as 'cancelled'. Place the cancelled documents in the relevant packet and add details to the list of cancelled postal ballot papers The list of cancelled ballot papers must include the following: 3 the name and number of the elector as stated in the register of electors (or, in the case of an elector who has an anonymous entry, only their electoral number) the number of the cancelled ballot paper the number of any replacement postal ballot paper that has been issued to the elector where the postal voter is a postal proxy, the name and address of the proxy In the case of cancelled spoilt ballot papers, the list of spoilt ballot papers must also include the following: 4 the name and number of the elector as stated in the register of electors (or, in the case of an elector who has an anonymous entry, only their electoral number) the number of any replacement postal ballot paper that has been issued to the elector where the postal voter is a postal proxy, the name and address of the proxy Step 4 Reseal the postal ballot box any agents present should be invited to apply their own seal to the resealed postal ballot box 1. Regulation 86A Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001, (RPR (E&W) 2001), regulation 86A Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (S) 2001) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPR (E&W) 2001 reg 56(5A), RPR (S) 2001 reg 56(5A) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. RPR (E&W) 2001 reg. 78A(3) , RPR (S) 2001 reg. 78A(3) ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. RPR (E&W) 2001 reg. 77(8), RPR (S) 2001 reg 77(8) ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Retrieval of cancelled postal votes Record keeping for cancelled ballot papers Managing issues with postal vote production or delivery Managing issues with postal vote production or delivery Whilst having robust quality assurance measures in place will help to ensure that supplier services are delivered correctly, it is important to be prepared for managing any errors or issues that may arise. As soon as you are made aware of an issue, either through escalation from your supplier, or through contact with electors, it is important to talk to your supplier to try to understand the scale and scope of the issue, and consider your pre-existing contingency plans as appropriate, as this will impact on your decision making on how to resolve the issue. Before making any decisions on what action to take, it is important that you contact us so that we can discuss the issue with you and provide tailored advice and support in how to manage it. Once you have all of the relevant information, have taken the appropriate advice and have made a decision on what action to take, you should agree plans with your suppliers accordingly and keep in close contact as these contingency plans are carried out. This may involve needing to re-check and approve proofs, or data figures or similar very urgently – but it is important that you still ensure that quality assurance checks are carried out to prevent any further errors. You can find more information about proof checking in our guidance on quality assurance . You will also need to consider what additional communications may be needed for electors or candidates and agents as a result of the issue; again this is something that Commission contacts can help you think through, so it is important that you contact us to discuss at the earliest opportunity. To find out how to contact your local

Commission team see our Contact Us page. Depending on the decision you make as the result of any issue, you may need to read our guidance on reissuing as a result of a procedural error. Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Managing issues with postal vote production or delivery](#)

[Retrieval of cancelled postal votes](#)

[Receiving and opening postal votes](#)

As part of your planning for the delivery of key processes, you will have made decisions on the process to follow when you receive completed postal votes. This section includes further guidance relating to the processes you must follow on receipt of completed postal votes, including managing the postal opening process and the records you must keep as part of this process. Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Receiving and opening postal votes](#)

[Managing issues with postal vote production or delivery](#)

[Return and receipt of postal votes](#)

Return and receipt of postal votes

You must have received a postal ballot pack by the close of poll via the post or having been handed in at a polling station or council buildings in the constituency, for it to be treated as duly returned. You should confirm the arrangements for the return of postal votes and any final sweeps to be carried out on polling day with Royal Mail. If a person is delivering their postal vote to a polling station and they are in a queue at the polling station at 10pm on polling day they must still be permitted to return a postal ballot pack.

[Secure storage of returned postal ballots](#)

Returned postal ballots should be stored securely at all times. This includes when they are transported to any postal vote opening session and to the verification and count venues. For more information see our guidance on ensuring the security of ballot papers. All postal votes returned to you, either at your office or at a polling station on polling day, must be stored in appropriate receptacles. You have a legal duty to take proper precautions for the safe custody of these receptacles. The methods of storage and transportation you choose should allow you to be satisfied that the returned postal ballot papers are kept securely and cannot be interfered with.

[Postal ballot boxes and packets for returned postal votes](#)

You must have two types of ballot boxes for securely storing returned postal votes: the postal voters' ballot box(es) the postal ballot box(es)

- 1 At each opening session, you must also provide receptacles for the following: rejected votes postal voting statements ballot paper envelopes rejected ballot paper envelopes

You are also required to have a copy of the postal voters' list and the postal proxy voters' list so that entries can be marked when postal voting statements are returned.

[Postal voters' ballot box](#)

The postal voters' ballot box is used to store returned postal votes while they await opening. Any postal ballot papers, postal voting statements or ballot paper envelopes that are not received as a complete pack should also be placed in the postal voters' ballot box. All postal voters' ballot boxes must be marked with the words 'postal voters' ballot box' and the name of the constituency.

- 2 You must take precautions to ensure the safe custody of the postal voters' ballot box.
- 3 You should seal the postal voters' ballot box and store it in a place that is secure, for example a locked cupboard or room, until the next scheduled opening of postal votes. These precautions will ensure the security of the contents of the postal voters ballot box is maintained at all times.

[Postal ballot boxes](#)

Postal ballot boxes are used to store the postal ballot papers which have been through the opening process and are to go forward to the count. All postal ballot boxes must be marked with the words 'postal ballot box' and the name of the constituency.

- 4 All postal ballot boxes must be stored securely until the count. Any agents present at a postal vote opening are entitled to add their seals to postal ballot boxes if they wish.
- 5 Postal votes returned to polling stations

You should emphasise to polling station staff, including

polling station inspectors, the importance of maintaining at all times the security of postal votes handed in to polling stations on polling day. To help to minimise the likelihood of receiving large quantities of postal votes at the count and help reduce the risk of delays to the start time of the count, you should arrange to collect postal votes from polling stations at various points throughout polling day. You should supply polling station staff with sufficient packets for postal votes returned to the polling station. These packets should be clearly labelled as containing postal votes and include the name of the polling station and polling station identifier. Further guidance on dealing with postal votes returned to polling stations can be found in the Commission's polling station handbook. Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice.

1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)) regulation 81, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) 2001 reg 81 ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 81(2), RPR(S) 2001 reg 81(2) ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. RPR(E&W) 2001, reg 81(6) RPR(S) 2001 reg 81(6) ■ Back to content at footnote 3

4. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 81(2), RPR(S) 2001 reg 81(2) ■ Back to content at footnote 4

5. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 81(4) ■ Back to content at footnote 5

Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Return and receipt of postal votes](#)

[Receiving and opening postal votes](#)

[Planning for postal vote opening](#)

[Planning for postal vote opening](#)

As part of your planning, you will need to identify the number of postal vote opening sessions that you think you will require and when these should be held, and make arrangements for these as necessary. The number of postal vote opening sessions you will require will depend largely on the total number of postal voters that you have and your estimated turnout of postal voters. For more considerations see our [guidance on planning for the delivery of key processes](#) . Your first opening session should be held within a couple of days of your first issue. Even if you have not received a high number of returned postal votes by then, you should still conduct a session at that time and take the opportunity to test your equipment and assess your workflows under real conditions. After this first session you should gauge whether your estimate of the number of postal vote opening sessions required is sufficient or whether you will need to revise it. Nothing prevents the opening of postal votes being carried out on a Saturday, Sunday or bank holiday, and indeed you may wish to consider doing so, particularly if it's apparent you will need additional postal vote opening sessions. You must give each candidate at least 48 hours' notice, in writing, of the time and location of each opening session and of the maximum number of postal voting agents that may be appointed to attend the opening of postal votes.

1 Who can attend the opening of postal votes? The following people are entitled to attend the opening of postal votes:

2 you and your staff candidates election agents (or a sub-agent on their behalf, or any person appointed by a candidate to attend in the election agent's place)

postal voting agents

Commission representatives

accredited observers

The postal vote opening process should be transparent and all those entitled to attend should be able to clearly view the whole process. You could hand out copies of your layout plan to assist those present to follow what is happening, where and when. You should provide anyone attending the postal vote opening with information on the processes you are going to follow. This can be a verbal explanation or through the provision of written guidance notes. You should inform candidates, election agents and postal voting agents of the process to be followed

should they wish to object to the rejection of a postal voting statement. More information on the process for managing this can be found in our guidance: checking personal identifiers . Everyone attending a postal vote opening session, including your staff working at the session, must: be provided with a copy of the secrecy requirements, available in and bilingually in and Welsh 3 maintain the secrecy of voting 4 You must take proper precautions for preventing any person from seeing the votes made on the ballot papers. Throughout the opening sessions you must keep the ballot papers face down. There may be occasions when the front of a ballot paper becomes visible. It is an offence for anyone to: attempt to find out the candidate(s) for whom any vote is given on any particular ballot paper communicate any such information obtained at those proceedings Equipment for opening of postal votes You should consider what other equipment you will require at the opening of postal votes, and ensure that it is in place and tested in advance. This should include: scanners extension leads printer projector and screen laptop rejected stamp and pad assorted stationery 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)) regulation 80, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) reg 80 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 68, RPR(S) 2001 reg 68 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA) section 66 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. RPA 1983 s66 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 30 March 2023 Book traversal links for Planning for postal vote opening Return and receipt of postal votes Keeping records of the receipt and opening of postal ballot packs Keeping records of the receipt and opening of postal ballot packs Keeping accurate records at the receipt and opening of postal votes is key to maintaining a clear audit trail. You are required to complete a statement as to postal ballot papers for the constituency 1 and the records you keep will be essential for ensuring that the statement is complete and accurate. You should ensure that all of the figures required for the statement are accurately recorded during the receipt, opening and verification of postal votes. You should: maintain a clear audit trail of the receipt and opening of postal ballot packs record the total number of envelopes received record the number of envelopes counted ensure that all of the figures required for completion of the statement as to postal ballot papers are accurately recorded keep a record of the total number of envelopes received at your office and placed in a postal voters' ballot box for audit purposes to check against the number of envelopes counted at opening complete a postal ballot paper account for every postal ballot box – we have provided a template prepare a list recording: the total number of postal votes placed in each box the total number of postal voters' ballot boxes batch ballot papers in a way that ensures you are able to retrieve and cancel a particular ballot paper if required – for example, if you have to re-issue following a procedural error For information on keeping a record of postal voting statements that have gone through the opening process and have been rejected, see our guidance on checking the personal identifiers . Postal voting ballot paper account (DOC) 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 regulation 91, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 reg 91 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Keeping records of the receipt and opening of postal ballot packs Planning for postal vote opening Marking the postal voters' and postal proxy voters' lists Marking the postal voters' and postal proxy voters' lists You must mark the postal voters' list or postal proxy voters' list whenever a postal voting statement is returned, regardless of whether or not it is accompanied by a ballot paper. 1 Confirming to voters their postal vote has been returned You are required to confirm to a voter or postal proxy, if requested,

whether you have received a postal voting statement or postal proxy back. You can do this by checking the marked lists. 2 You are also required to confirm, if requested, if the number of the ballot paper issued to the elector or postal proxy has been recorded on either of the two lists of provisionally rejected votes that are required to be kept and used for matching up documents. For more information on this see our guidance on the process for opening postal votes . 3 You must be satisfied that any request has been made by the elector or postal proxy themselves before providing any confirmation regarding the status of their ballot. 4 You could, for example, ask for their name, address and date of birth before providing the information. 1. Regulation 87(3) Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)), reg 87(3) Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Reg 84A RPR(E&W) 2001, reg 84A RPR(S) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Reg 84A RPR (E&W) 2001 reg 84A RPR(S) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Reg 84A(2) RPR(E&W) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Marking the postal voters' and postal proxy voters' lists Keeping records of the receipt and opening of postal ballot packs Process for opening postal votes Process for opening postal votes The process for opening postal ballot packs is set out in legislation: Stage 1: opening of the postal voters' ballot box 1 count and record the number of returned postal ballot packs (i.e., the number of envelopes 'B' in the postal voters' ballot box) open covering envelope 'B' and remove the postal voting statement and ballot paper envelope check the number on the postal voting statement matches the number on the ballot paper envelope (envelope 'A') place a mark in the postal voters' list or postal proxy voters' list as appropriate to show that a postal voting statement has been returned Stage 2: checking the personal identifiers 2 check that the elector has signed the statement and given a date of birth check the signature and date of birth on the postal voting statement matches those on the personal identifiers record if you reject a postal voting statement, you must mark the statement 'rejected', attach to it the ballot paper envelope (if there is no such envelope you must attach it to the ballot paper) and place it in the receptacle for rejected votes. Before placing it in the receptacle, you must show it to the agents and, if any of them object to your decision, add the words "rejection objected to". You should also record the reason for the rejection. Stage 3: opening of postal ballot paper envelopes 3 open the ballot paper envelope (envelope 'A') and remove the ballot paper ensuring the ballot paper is kept face down at all times check the number on the ballot paper envelope (envelope 'A') matches the number on the back of the ballot paper place the ballot paper in the postal ballot box Stage 4: sealing the postal ballot boxes 4 Count and record the number of postal ballot papers to be sealed in each postal ballot box. Seal and securely store the postal ballot boxes. A summary of this process is available in the following postal vote opening flowchart: Postal vote opening flowchart (DOC) You should batch ballot papers in such a way as to ensure that you will be able to retrieve and cancel any particular ballot paper (for example, because you have had to re-issue following a procedural error). For this reason, and also because of the need to verify the contents of all postal ballot boxes at the verification, you should consider how many ballot papers you want to store in each box. Matching up postal voting statements with postal ballot papers You must keep two lists of provisionally rejected postal ballot papers: 5 one to record the ballot paper number of any postal ballot paper that has been returned without a postal voting statement one to record the ballot paper number on any postal voting statement that was not returned with the ballot paper The following template spreadsheet is

available that you can use for this purpose: Postal vote matching spreadsheet (XLS)
 You should check these lists regularly to ensure that any mismatched documents can be matched up, enabling those postal ballots to be re-introduced into the process. 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)) regulation 84, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) 2001 reg 84 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 85A, RPR(S) 2001 reg 85A ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 86, RPR(S) 2001 reg 86 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 89, RPR(S) 2001 reg 89 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. RPR(E&W) 2001 reg 87, RPR(S) 2001 reg 87 ■ Back to content at footnote 5

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Book traversal links for Process for opening postal votes

Marking the postal voters' and postal proxy voters' lists

Checking the personal identifiers

Checking the personal identifiers

You must check the identifiers on all returned postal voting statements.

1 Cross-boundary constituencies

Cross-boundary constituencies

If you are the (A)RO for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries you will need to consider what impact this will have on your processes for checking personal identifiers on returned postal voting statements, and whether you need to delegate some of your functions to a senior officer at the other local authority/authorities. You will need to consider how you will obtain the data from the other local authority/authorities as well as considering the proportion of the constituency that is contained in the other local authority area(s). You should liaise closely at an early stage in the election planning process with the ERO(s) and electoral services staff at the relevant local authority/authorities in order to identify any possible issues and how these will be addressed.

Checking the personal identifiers

If you have delegated authority to another person to make decisions on postal voting statements at the verification of postal vote identifiers, you should provide them with a copy of the following Commission and Forensic Science Service guidance on signature checking, and instruct them to follow it.

Forensic Science Service guidance on signature checking (PDF)

These tables are a guide to making decisions on whether to accept or reject a returned postal voting statement.

When to accept a returned postal vote statement:

Signature provided?	DoB provided?	Signature waiver granted?	Blank	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provided but in a different format – e.g. day and month are transposed – and you are satisfied that the DoB given is the same as the one held on postal voters record	N/A	When to reject a returned postal vote statement:	Signature provided?	DoB provided?	Signature waiver granted?	Blank
Yes	Yes	No	Blank	Blank	Blank	Blank
Yes	Yes	Blank	No	Yes	Does not match postal voters record	No
Does not match postal voters record	Yes	No	Yes	Date postal vote completed	provided in error	N/A

Your decision on determining a postal voting statement does not have to be based only on the information on the postal voting statement and personal identifiers record. When making your decision, you may refer to other sources, for example, the signature provided on a registration form, or consider any additional information you have. For example, an elector may contact you to say that they have broken their arm since supplying their identifiers to the ERO and are unable to replicate their normal signature. You may decide to accept their postal voting statement as valid if you are satisfied that this is the case, even if it has a signature that looks different to the one on the personal identifiers record. Every decision on a postal voting statement should be taken on an individual basis. Complete absence of a signature (where the elector has not been granted a waiver) or a date of birth must always lead to a rejection. In determining the validity of the postal voting statement, neither the signature nor the date of birth is more important than the other – both must be provided (unless the signature has not been provided and the elector has been granted

a waiver), and both must match . Candidates, election agents and postal voting agents may object to the rejection of a postal voting statement. If they object to a rejection, you must mark the postal voting statement 'rejection objected to' 2 before attaching it to the ballot paper envelope and placing it in the receptacle for rejected votes. Accredited observers and representatives of the Commission have no right to object to the rejection of a postal voting statement. 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)) regulation 85A(2), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) reg 85A(2) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPR(E&W) 2001, reg 85A(4), RPR(S) 2001, reg 85A(4) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Checking the personal identifiers Process for opening postal votes Dealing with cut or torn postal ballot papers Dealing with cut or torn postal ballot papers Sometimes, you may find that electors have cut or torn their completed postal ballot paper. You will need to decide whether the returned extract is a valid ballot paper. There are various scenarios that may arise: Scenario Accept at postal vote verification stage? Accept at count? The extract has the ballot paper number and the official mark on it Yes - The 'ballot paper' will pass through the postal vote verification process (as it contains the ballot paper number) and go forward to the count. Yes - This could be accepted as a valid vote at the count, provided the intention of the voter was clear. The extract has only the ballot paper number and no official mark Yes - The 'ballot paper' will pass through the postal vote verification process and go forward to the count. No - It must be rejected at the count as it does not contain the official mark. The extract has only the official mark and no ballot paper number No - The 'ballot paper' must be rejected at the postal vote verification stage as it will not be matched on the opening of the 'A' envelope or against the postal vote statement. N/A The extract has neither an official mark nor a ballot paper number No - The 'ballot paper' must be rejected at the postal vote verification stage as, again, it will not be matched on the opening of the 'A' envelope or against the postal vote statement. N/A Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Dealing with cut or torn postal ballot papers Checking the personal identifiers The final opening of postal votes The final opening of postal votes In order to avoid any potential delay to the verification and count process(es), you should keep to a minimum the number of postal votes that have to be opened during the verification and count. This is particularly important as you must take reasonable steps to begin counting the votes as soon as practicable and within four hours of the close of poll. You must ensure that the opening of postal votes, whether taking place at the verification and count or somewhere else, is carried out in full view of any candidates, agents and observers present. 1 As with all other opening sessions, you are required to provide notice of the time and place of the final postal vote opening session. 2 Following the completion of the final opening of postal votes, you are required to securely seal and store various receptacles and documents. You can find further information on this in our guidance: Ensuring the security of ballot papers and other materials . Keeping a record of incomplete postal ballot packs returned You will have kept two lists of provisionally rejected postal ballot papers throughout the opening process: 3 one to record the ballot paper number of any postal ballot paper that has been returned without a postal voting statement a second to record the ballot paper number on any postal voting statement that was not returned with the postal ballot paper After the last opening session, these will become: the final list of ballot papers with no valid postal voting statement received, and the final list of valid postal voting statements received without some or all of the ballot papers

1. Regulations 67 and 68 Representation of the People (England & Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)), regs 67 and 68 Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Reg 80 RPR(E&W) 2001, reg 80 RPR(S) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Reg 87 RPR(E&W) 2001, reg 87 RPR(S) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for The final opening of postal votes Dealing with cut or torn postal ballot papers Preparing a record of those postal votes that have failed the identifier checks Preparing a record of those postal votes that have failed the identifier checks After an election, EROs are required to notify postal voters if their postal vote has been rejected as a result of failing the personal identifier checks and to inform them of the specific reason for the rejection. You must keep a record of the categories under which you are rejecting individual postal voting statements to enable this. Every rejected postal voting statement must be accounted for. You must keep a list of those postal votes that have failed the personal identifier checks. The list must contain, for each such rejected postal vote: 1 the elector's name and address (and the name and address of the proxy if the elector has a proxy) the elector's number on the register of electors (and that of the proxy if the elector has a proxy) the specified reason(s) for the rejection of the postal voting statement, and any other information relating to the rejection that you consider appropriate, but not the ballot paper number(s) The specified reasons for rejection of a postal voting statement are that: the signature does not match the example held on the personal identifiers record the date of birth does not match the one held on the personal identifiers record the signature field is blank the date of birth field is blank Where a postal voter appears on the list of postal votes that have failed the personal identifier checks, the ERO is required to notify the postal voter of the rejection within three months of the date of the poll. Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies If, as (A)RO, you are responsible for a constituency that crosses local authority boundaries you must forward the relevant parts of this list to the ERO(s) at the other local authority/authorities. This must be done at the same time as you forward all other relevant election documents to the ERO(s). Preparing a record of those postal votes that have failed the identifier checks The ERO's requirement to send a notification is suspended if you suspect that an offence may have been committed in relation to a particular postal vote. 2 You should therefore keep a record of any instances where you suspect an offence may have been committed and forward it to the ERO so that they know in which cases they should not send out a postal vote identifier rejection notice. This should be done at the same time as you forward all other election documents to the ERO. Where fraud is suspected, you should package the contents of the postal ballot pack separately and inform your local police Single Point of Contact (SPOC). You should handle the postal ballot pack as little as possible and, where you can, make a note of each person who has handled the postal ballot pack. For further information, see our Guidance for EROs on issuing postal vote identifier rejection notices . 1. Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR(E&W)) regulation 91, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR(S)) reg 91 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. RPR (E&W) 2001 reg 61C(2)(b), RPR(S) 2001 reg 61C(2)(b) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Preparing a record of those postal votes that have failed the identifier checks The final opening of postal votes Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Absent voting Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Absent voting Forensic Science Service guidance on signature checking (PDF) UKPGE Election timetable generic (DOCX) UKPE By election timetable

generic (DOCX) Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary elections 2023 (PDF) Postal voting ballot paper account (DOC) Postal vote opening flowchart (DOC) Postal vote matching spreadsheet (XLS) Secrecy requirements - postal voting (DOC) Last updated: 26 September 2023 Book traversal links for Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Absent voting Preparing a record of those postal votes that have failed the identifier checks Polling station voting Polling station voting This part of the guidance focuses on the preparations you will need to make in advance of polling day and some of the issues that you, as RO, may need to consider on the day. It covers what equipment and materials you will need to provide for polling stations, information on polling station set-up and managing the close of poll. Our polling station handbook covers in detail the voting procedures and what polling station staff can expect on polling day. Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. You can find our guidance on the identification of suitable polling stations in our section on booking suitable polling stations . Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Polling station voting Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Absent voting Equipment and materials to be provided for the polling station Equipment and materials to be provided for the polling station You are required to provide certain equipment and materials to polling stations, and will need to plan this in advance to ensure that everything is in place for the delivery of polling station voting. Summary of items to be provided to polling stations You must provide polling stations with: 1 ballot box(es) ballot papers (including tendered ballot papers) pens or pencils to enable voters to mark their ballot papers polling screens the relevant part of the electoral register absent voters lists – postal voters, proxy voters and postal proxies forms to record the details of electors who have been issued ballot papers after the correction of a clerical error (which may be appended to the polling station register) the corresponding number list ballot paper accounts ballot paper refusal list (BPRL) voter identification evaluation form (VIDEF) and VIDEF notes form a large-print version of the ballot paper, for display inside the polling station an enlarged hand-held sample copy of the ballot paper to give to electors to take to a polling booth with them for reference a voting device for use by blind or partially sighted voters. guidance for voters ('How to vote at these elections') notices (for display both inside and outside the polling station) instructions for voters notices (to be displayed inside the polling booth) large notice showing the accepted forms of photographic ID to be produced when applying for a ballot paper and a statement that further proof of identity may be required to resolve any discrepancy between the voter's name on the electoral register and the name on the identification used (for display inside the polling station) a separate area for the checking of photographic ID in private declaration by companions of voters with disabilities forms a list of tendered votes a list of votes marked by the Presiding Officer a statement of number of votes marked by the Presiding Officer a list of voters with disabilities assisted by companions packets, with seals, in which to place the items to be returned to you, such as postal ballot papers returned to the polling station, and for packaging the

election documentation at close of poll any additional equipment you have determined necessary to make voting easier and more accessible for disabled voters In addition, you should provide: mirrors, so that voters who removed their face coverings for identification purposes can ensure their face covering is in place correctly before leaving the private area privacy screens, ■where a separate room is not available for checking photographic ID in private. ROs should take into account the safety of staff and the risk of allegations of undue influence envelopes, with seals, in which to place any ballot papers that have been issued but which the elector has not placed in the ballot box form or list to record electors marked as postal voters but who claim not to have applied for one notepaper for use by polling station staff stationery items as required, e.g. paper clips, drawing pins, adhesive tack, adhesive tape plastic sacks for returning stationery and equipment to the verification venue envelopes for making up assorted packets You are legally required to make such arrangements as you think fit to ensure that staff, candidates and agents appointed to attend the station are provided with the following relevant secrecy requirements: Secrecy requirements - the poll (DOC) We have also produced a template survey for polling station voters who required additional assistance when voting, which you may want to provide in polling stations. More information can be found in our guidance for Returning Officers on assistance with voting for disabled voters on Reviewing the election . You should check that all polling station equipment is fit for purpose and that you have a sufficient quantity, particularly in the event of a high turnout. This should include considering if you should supply additional ballot boxes to Presiding Officers as one box may not be sufficient should there be a high turnout. You should prepare your polling station equipment and materials in good time before polling day, either for delivery to polling stations or collection by Presiding Officers. You should ensure that any additional equipment you have identified to make the polling station accessible is delivered and set up in good time for the opening of the poll. Our guidance on providing equipment that makes voting easier for disabled voters provides further information to support your planning. Where a polling station has an induction loop installed, it should be used wherever possible to support the accessibility of the electoral process to voters with hearing loss. Polling station staff should be trained on how to use these at the briefing session.

1. Schedule 1 Rules 25 and 29 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Equipment and materials to be provided for the polling station Polling station voting Allocation of ballot papers Allocation of ballot papers You must provide each polling station with the number of ballot papers that you think may be necessary. 1 As part of your consideration, you should estimate expected turnout levels. You should assume that the turnout will not be less than the turnout at the last equivalent poll, and you should take into account the potential for late engagement and interest in the election, and any local or national issues which may affect turnout. If you decide for any reason that you are not allocating ballot papers for 100% of electors entitled to vote in person at a polling station, you should give careful consideration to the number that will be required in each case and have plans in place to ensure that additional ballot papers can be provided in a timely manner to any polling station that may require them. You should also ensure that Presiding Officers understand how to complete the ballot paper accounts to take account of any additional allocation. When allocating ballot papers to polling stations, you must ensure that the numbers on the ballot papers allocated to each polling station run consecutively in order to avoid any problems with completing the corresponding number

list or ballot paper account. Guidance on the printing of ballot papers is provided in Production of ballot papers and checking ballot papers before allocation . You must also supply tendered ballot papers to Presiding Officers. To avoid tendered ballot papers being issued in error, it is good practice to supply them in a sealed envelope with: instructions stating that the envelope should only be opened and the ballot papers within it issued in limited, prescribed circumstances after consultation with the elections office a brief description of those circumstances 2 instructions to consult the polling station handbook for further information Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 29(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 Rule 40 RPA1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Allocation of ballot papers Equipment and materials to be provided for the polling station Polling station registers and absent voting lists Polling station registers and absent voting lists You must provide each Presiding Officer with the appropriate part of the electoral register for their polling station and the appropriate absent voting lists. Polling station staff should be trained on the various franchise markers that will appear on the register. 1 They need to be aware of the importance of the security of voters' personal details on the electoral register and absent voting lists. Polling station registers can be printed once the final election notice of alteration has been published, five working days before polling day. You should ensure that all printed polling station registers: are checked to ensure that they are complete reflect any recent additions or deletions to the register have the appropriate franchise markers in place You should instruct your Presiding Officers to check that: they have been provided with the correct register for their polling station the register includes the expected number of electors allocated to their polling station Alterations to the register You should have procedures in place to deal with any necessary amendments made before polling day or on polling day itself. These procedures should cover your method: to amend the polling station registers and proxy lists after they have been printed, as a result of clerical errors or granting emergency proxy applications for communicating the relevant information to Presiding Officers, which may be done orally or in writing More information about clerical errors can be found in our guidance for EROs in England , Scotland and Wales . Cross-boundary constituencies Cross-boundary constituencies You should liaise and agree with the other ERO(s) in your constituency a method for communicating to Presiding Officers changes to the register as a result of a clerical error, court decisions or the granting of an emergency proxy. Polling station registers and absent voting lists If a person makes a complaint to polling station staff that suggests that they should be on the electoral register, the Presiding Officer must communicate that representation to the Electoral Registration Officer as soon as is practicable. For this to work effectively you will need to ensure that you have suitable communication systems in place between Presiding Officers and the Electoral Registration Officer. For more information on training staff see our guidance on training presiding officers, poll clerks and polling station inspectors . 1. Schedule 1 Rule 29 (3)(c) Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Polling station registers and absent voting lists Allocation of ballot papers Corresponding number lists Corresponding number lists You must prepare and provide a

corresponding number list for each polling station. 1 The corresponding number list is a prescribed document that can be found in the appendix to the election rules. There is no provision for a form 'to like effect' to be used. 2 There are two types of corresponding number list: one list to be used in polling stations, containing the ballot paper numbers and a column to add the elector numbers of voters to whom those ballot papers are issued. 3 The other list is to be used at postal vote issuing sessions, containing the number and unique identifying mark of every ballot paper produced, as well as the elector numbers of postal voters. For more information on the postal vote opening process please see our guidance on Receiving and opening postal votes . Combination Combination Where two or more polls are combined, you must prepare and provide a combined corresponding number list for each polling station. 4 You will need to consider how you will produce the combined corresponding number lists for use at combined polls in practice. One possible solution could be to use a separate sheet of paper for each poll, but which are then joined together in some way (for example, by staple) at the end of the process. If the issue of postal votes has been combined, a combined corresponding number list must also be used at the issue of postal votes. 5 1. Schedule 1 Rule 19A(1) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA) and Regulations 63A(3) and (4) Representation of the People Regulations 2001 (RPR) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 Rule 19A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Sch 1 Rule 19A(1) RPA 1983 and Regs 63A(3) and (4) RPR 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Sch 1 Rule 19A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Sch 1 Rule 19A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Corresponding number lists Polling station registers and absent voting lists Ballot paper refusal list and voter identification evaluation form Ballot paper refusal list and voter identification evaluation form You must provide each polling station with documents that capture information relating to the voter identification requirements. Ballot paper refusal list (BPRL) evaluation form (VIDEF) VIDEF notes sheet ■■■■ The BPRL and VIDEF notes sheet are used throughout the day to capture and record information in relation to the voter ID requirement: Document Information collected BPRL Number of ballot papers refused on grounds of: the photographic ID was not a good likeness the PO believed the photographic ID was a forgery the elector failed to answer the prescribed questions satisfactorily The BPRL would be updated if an elector later returns with an acceptable form of photographic ID VIDEF notes sheet Number of Voter Authority Certificates used by electors (or proxies) as their acceptable photographic ID Number of Elector's Documents used by anonymous electors as their acceptable photographic ID Number of photographic ID checked in private Details of electors who were not issued with a ballot paper and the number of these electors who later returned and were issued with a ballot paper At the close of poll the PO will complete the VIDEF with the information from the BPRL and VIDEF notes sheet. BPRL (Ballot paper refusal list) (DOCX) Voter identification notes and VIDEF The polling station handbook provides further information how to complete these forms. Last updated: 30 March 2023 Book traversal links for Ballot paper refusal list and voter identification evaluation form Corresponding number lists Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to the polling station Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to the polling station Postal voters can return their postal vote by hand to any polling station in their electoral area . 1 You should brief polling station staff to identify which postal votes can be returned to their polling station. For more information on training staff please see our guidance on Training Presiding Officers, Poll Clerks and polling station inspectors . You should provide polling stations with packets for received postal votes. The number and style of

packets should be based on returns to polling stations at the last equivalent polls, but you should keep in mind the potential for late engagement and interest in the election which may affect turn out. Records of all such packets should be kept so that each one can be accounted for. The packets should be clearly labelled and state: that they contain postal votes the name of the polling station the polling station identifier Security of returned postal votes You should ensure that the packets are capable of being securely sealed. Polling agents are entitled to attach their seal to sealed packets before they are removed from the polling station and must therefore be permitted to do so. 2 As part of your training you should emphasise to Presiding Officers the importance of maintaining the security of postal votes returned to polling stations. The postal votes should be immediately placed in the packets provided and you should ensure that the packets are stored securely throughout the day. You should arrange for postal votes to be collected from polling stations throughout the day as this will help to reduce the number that will have to be dealt with after the close of poll. Polling station inspectors can perform this duty. You should ensure that processes are in place to maintain a clear audit trail and to ensure the security of collected postal vote packets while in transit. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 31A Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 Rule 43(1) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to the polling station Ballot paper refusal list and voter identification evaluation form Polling station log Polling station log You should prepare a polling station log for polling station staff to use to record any problems or anomalies. You should instruct polling station staff to record in the polling station log: any instances where they are required to ask the prescribed questions as a result of suspected personation, making notes of as much information as possible, for example, any distinguishing characteristics, which may help any future investigation. Appendix 7 of the polling station handbook sets out the procedure for dealing with personation, which involves asking the prescribed questions. the name and address of any voter who is unable to vote for any administrative reason anything that may help to explain any issues with the ballot paper account at the verification – for example, if a voter has been seen leaving the polling station with a ballot paper. You should consider instructing Presiding Officers to keep the log and ballot paper account together when delivering the ballot papers to the count. If you are concerned that personation may have taken place at a polling station you should contact your police single point of contact (SPOC) and you can also contact your local Commission team for additional support. You can find further information in our guidance on maintaining the integrity of the election . Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Polling station log Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to the polling station Setting up polling stations Setting up polling stations Polling stations should be laid out with the voter in mind. In particular, you should take into account the needs of voters with a range of disabilities. You should consider the positioning of all of the furniture and equipment, as well as where the notices should be displayed, and the placement of signage both within and outside of the polling station. You should develop plans for the layout of each of your polling stations which can be used to assist those setting up the polling stations. You should consider the voter

experience and flow, including how the voter will move through the voting process from entering to exiting the polling station. You will need to ensure that whoever is in charge of setting up polling stations knows how to do so and what the layout should be capable of achieving. If someone other than polling station staff is setting up the polling station, your polling station staff should check that it has been set up properly. They should have reference to any layout plans you have produced and the polling station set-up checklist in the Commission's polling station handbook when doing so. The polling station handbook also covers the positioning of equipment and display of notices, and provides examples of layouts for both a room where there is one polling station and a room where there is more than one polling station. Polling station inspector visits can be used to check polling station set-up and to ensure that all notices remain properly displayed throughout polling day. We have developed the following checklist to support their visits: Checklist for polling station inspectors (DOC) You can find more information and resources for staff training on the set up of polling stations in our guidance on training presiding officers, poll clerks and polling station inspectors . Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Setting up polling stations Polling station log Polling station notices You must produce and display the 'Guidance for voters' notice and the 'Instructions for voters' notice. The contents and display requirements of these notices are prescribed in legislation. 1 The 'Guidance for voters' notice is required by law to be printed in conspicuous characters and exhibited inside and outside of the polling station. 2 The 'Instructions for voters' notice is required by law to be exhibited in every polling booth. 3 Use of or Welsh in polling stations When you brief polling station staff, you should make clear that only (or in Wales, or Welsh) should be used when assisting or giving instructions to electors in polling stations. This ensures transparency in proceedings, and enables any observers or polling agents present in the polling station to monitor the voting process. Some voters may need assistance in another language because of their limited (or or Welsh) language skills. You should consider what support you are able to provide to those voters in your area, such as providing translations of the polling station notices. In some exceptional cases the translated notices may not be sufficient or appropriate. For example, a voter may have low levels of literacy or may have a question that falls outside of what is covered by the notices. In those circumstances, polling station staff may provide assistance in a language other than or Welsh if they can. Where assistance is given in another language, polling station staff should explain to other staff and any polling agents or observers present what question has been asked and the response given. 1. Schedule 1 Rules 29 (4) and (5) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA). The content and design of the notices is different for a standalone UK Parliamentary election than it is for those to be used at other polls. This is a consequence of the fact that the 'Guidance for voters' and 'Instructions for voters' notices contained in Schedule 1 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2006) have not been updated to bring them into line with the notices for use at other elections. ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 Rule 29(4) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Sch 1 Rule 29(5) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Setting up polling stations Taking selfies in polling stations Taking selfies in polling stations You need to decide when to allow the use of mobile phones in polling stations and make this clear to polling station staff in your staff training . Our advice is that you should not allow photos to be taken inside polling stations. The law relating to obtaining information in polling

stations and disclosing such information is complex and there is a risk that someone taking a photo inside a polling station may be in breach of the law, 1 whether intentionally or not. You could decide to display a notice inside polling stations to make clear that photography of any kind (including photos taken on mobile phones) is not permitted. While you should ensure that all polling station staff are aware of this guidance, they should also understand that some voters with sight loss may need to use apps on their mobile phone or other devices to help them to read documents, and they should allow them to do so. 1. Section 66 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Taking selfies in polling stations Providing information about the number of ballot papers issued Providing information about the number of ballot papers issued An election agent or polling agent might ask polling station staff for information on the number of ballot papers issued. It is for you to decide whether to release this information. A request for the number of ballot papers that have been issued can only be made by those who are entitled to be inside the polling station. If you decide to provide this information, you must be careful not to release any information that may risk breaching the secrecy of the ballot. We have produced guidance on how polling station staff can calculate the number of ballot papers issued. This can be found in our briefing for polling station staff. Polling station staff briefing - UK Parliamentary general election (PPT) Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Providing information about the number of ballot papers issued Taking selfies in polling stations Close of poll Close of poll Voters who at 10pm are in their polling station, or in a queue outside their polling station, for the purpose of voting, may apply for a ballot paper. 1 You should consider as part of your planning where queues may arise and ensure that you have arrangements in place to be able to respond as necessary You should ensure that polling station staff are monitoring turnout throughout the day and providing progress reports to polling station inspectors, and that they alert you to any intelligence that indicates a risk of there being a queue at close of poll at any polling station. You should also consider involving your police SPOC in planning arrangements to deal with possible queues at the close of poll, so they can assist you with queue management if necessary. The Commission's polling station handbook sets out in detail the processes to be followed at the close of poll, including how to deal with voters held in a queue at 10pm. 1. Schedule 1 Rule 37(7) Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Close of poll Providing information about the number of ballot papers issued Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Polling station voting Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Polling station voting Checklist for polling station inspectors (DOC) Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary elections 2023 (PDF) Polling station handbook quick guide - UK Parliamentary elections 2023 (PDF) Secrecy requirements - the poll (DOC) Last updated: 11 July 2023 Book traversal links for Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Polling station voting Close of poll Verification and Count Verification and Count This section is intended to help you make decisions about some of the key aspects of delivering the verification and the counting of the votes, such as managing attendance and observation, ensuring security of ballot papers, audit processes and dealing with doubtful ballot papers. It provides guidance to support

the key decisions you need to make, and highlights recommended approaches to assist you in understanding and discharging your duties, ensuring that there is transparency in the process and enabling you to deliver an accurate result in which voters, candidates and political parties have confidence. Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Verification and Count Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Polling station voting Planning for the verification and count

Planning for the verification and count

There are a variety of methods for arranging verification and count processes at an election, and there is no one size fits all approach which can be applied. Every electoral area has its own set of local circumstances that will influence the decisions that you must make as part of your planning for how you will deliver the verification and count processes. When planning for the delivery of the verification and count you should keep your general planning assumptions under review to ensure they continue to be realistic and robust. This should include assumptions on turnout, the number of candidates, speed and capability of count staff and expected timing for completing the various count stages. Such a review will help inform a realistic assessment of whether you will be able to deliver the overall plan for the count, and whether and when it may be necessary to implement contingency plans. In all cases, your plan should be flexible enough to allow you to respond if any of your assumptions change, covering what contingency actions you will take in such circumstances. Your plan should also identify key points during the count process at which you will review progress against the expected schedule. This progress review should be used to keep candidates, agents and the media informed of the progress of the count.

Decision-making

You should keep a record of all steps taken in order to be able to provide an audit trail demonstrating your decision-making process. You should be able to explain your decisions, and you should be prepared to do so in response to enquiries. To help build confidence in your plan for the verification and count, you should share information and consult and engage on your plan with stakeholders. You should communicate throughout your planning process and be prepared to explain the reasons for the decisions you are taking. For key decisions, you should provide your reasons to stakeholders in writing. You should also identify in advance those decisions about the management of the count that must be taken in consultation and agreement with candidates and agents, and make clear to them on what basis you will be making decisions. This includes, for example, decisions on re-counts and the suspension of the count. While you should seek input from those affected or interested to inform your decision-making, ultimately the responsibility for making decisions remains with you as (A)RO. You will need to decide the best way to communicate these decisions once taken.

Documentation

You should produce templates for all the documents to be used at the verification and count in advance and ensure staff are familiar with them. Colour coding the documentation can be an effective way of quickly locating the relevant documents.

Equipment and set up

You will need to decide what equipment you will require to administer the verification and count (as appropriate) and to communicate with the candidates and agents and anybody else attending the count, including: public announcement systems phone lines mobile phones and mobile signals general IT equipment and spreadsheets for recording verification and count figures equipment for verifying the personal identifiers on returned postal votes (if the final opening of postal votes is to take place at the verification venue) screens for displaying any relevant information throughout the count

We have prepared a checklist to help relevant staff ensure that all materials, including stationery and equipment required at the verification and count venue are present. Example checklist of materials

required at the verification and count (DOC) We have also developed guidance to support you should you need to procure any equipment. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Planning for the verification and count Verification and Count Principles of an effective verification and count Principles of an effective verification and count You should ensure that your verification and count arrangements can deliver the following key principles for an effective verification and count: All processes are transparent, with a clear and unambiguous audit trail. For example: everything is carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend sufficient information is provided to attendees on the processes to be followed communication of information is consistent and open The verification produces an accurate result. This means that the number of ballot papers in each box either matches the number of ballot papers issued as stated on the ballot paper account or, if it does not: the source of the variance has been identified and can be explained, and/or the box has been recounted at least twice, until the same number of ballot papers is counted on two consecutive occasions The count produces an accurate result, where: the total number of votes cast for each candidate and rejected votes matches the total number of ballot papers given on the verification statement for the constituency the verification and count are timely the secrecy of the vote is maintained at all times the security of ballot papers and other stationery is maintained at all times the communication of information at the verification and count is clear and timely In addition to considering how to ensure that your processes will enable you to meet the key principles, you will need to consider other practical factors that will affect the organisation and timing of the verification and count, such as: the size of the constituency the geography of the constituency the size and capacity of the venue the ability to ensure transparency for candidates, agents and observers at the venue the cost of using the venue In all cases, you should keep a record of your decisions and you should keep your verification and count plans under regular review as circumstances may change. More guidance on choosing and managing your venue can be found in Verification and count venues and layouts. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Principles of an effective verification and count Planning for the verification and count Timing of the verification and count Timing of the verification and count As prescribed in legislation, you are required to make arrangements for the verification and counting of the votes at the election as soon as practicable after the close of poll. 1 The legislation also specifies that you must take reasonable steps to begin counting the votes as soon as practicable and within four hours of the close of poll. 2 This duty relates to the actual counting of the votes and not to the verification process. Guidance on what you need to do if you do not commence the count within four hours of the close of poll is provided in our guidance on the count. You should take decisions on the timing of the count before the notice of election is published and inform those with an interest, including local political parties and broadcasters, at an early stage. There will be an expectation among candidates, parties and the media that the results will be declared as soon as possible after the close of poll. You will therefore need to plan carefully how to manage the expectations of candidates, parties and the media. Methodology The way that you organise and manage the verification and count will have an impact on timing. You should consider using a mini-count approach when planning your verification and count. It is widely accepted that breaking down the verification and count, into areas smaller than the relevant electoral area, is particularly effective in achieving an accurate, timely result with clear audit trails. The results from those areas are then aggregated to achieve

an overall result for the relevant electoral area. Any counting issues that may arise will be limited to a more manageable area and any re-counts that may happen as a result, may be limited. You will need to decide whether you will take the opportunity to start counting votes before the verification is completed. You should allow sufficient time to conduct a well-run count process and ensure an accurate result in which voters, candidates and agents can have confidence.

Combination For combined polls, you will need to consider: Whether you need to liaise with any other relevant ROs to ensure that your plans fit in with overarching plans? You will also need to decide if: Whether you will hold your counts at different times and on different days in order to manage numbers of attendees? Whether the legislative requirements for when candidates should take up office will impact your plans?

1. Rule 44(1) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. Rule 45(3A) Sch. 1 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Timing of the verification and count

Principles of an effective verification and count

Estimating the duration of your verification and count

There are several things that you can think about at an early stage to help estimate the timings of each stage of your verification and count. This should include: the number of staff and any staffing formulas you have in place e.g. number of ballot papers counted per hour per count assistant whether you have a stand-alone election or combination of polls the number of ballot papers that were processed at a previous equivalent election the methodology used at previous elections e.g. mini-counts the timings at previous equivalent elections for completion of the various stages of the verification and count. You should share these timings with stakeholders together with the assumptions that underpin them. However, you should also warn stakeholders that these timings are indicative only and may change on the night - for example, if turnout was significantly higher or lower than expected. Some stakeholders may hold expectations as to how quickly the processes can be completed which cannot be met in practice and this can lead to tension and frustration at the verification and count. To manage expectations, you should explain in some detail the processes involved, how long each stage is likely to take and the resources you have put in place.

Combination For a UK Parliamentary election you should make stakeholders aware that you do not have to wait until you have completed the verification of all polls for which you are taking on the combined function as the RO, before you can start counting the votes.

1. Paragraph 22(1AB) The Representation of the People (Combination of Polls) (E&W) Regulations 2004 ■ Back to content at footnote 1

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Estimating the duration of your verification and count

Timing of the verification and count

Estimating the number of ballot papers

Estimating the number of ballot papers. Understanding the number of ballot papers that will need to be dealt with is a crucial factor in your planning, and will help determine the resources that you need for the verification and count. You need to think about the estimated: size of the electorate number of used and unused ballot papers number of returned postal ballot papers number of doubtful ballot papers to be adjudicated.

Electorate You will be able to estimate the eligible electorate by using the figure after publication of the revised register as a baseline, but accounting for likely increases in registration ahead of the polls. An analysis of the increases in the electorate ahead of the last scheduled polls can provide you with an idea of the percentage increase in electorate you can expect at the polls. You should also factor in any increases that may result from registration activity that EROs will be carrying out. You should be able to keep that estimate

under review by monitoring the monthly updates to the register. If you are not also the ERO, you will need to liaise with the relevant ERO to obtain the registration data. Similarly, if you are an (A)RO in a cross-boundary constituency you will need to liaise with the EROs across the constituency to obtain the relevant data.

Used and unused polling station ballot papers You will be able to develop an estimate of the number of used ballot papers you may have to process from polling stations by multiplying the estimated electorate by the expected turnout. You can then identify the volume of unused papers that will also need to be verified, as set out in the following example table:

Eligible electorate (polling station voters)	Expected Turnout (e.g. 69.1%)	Number of unused ballot papers (e.g. 30.9%)
68,175	47,108	21,067

The above calculation will give you a robust estimate of the number of polling station ballot papers you will need to manage at the verification and count, but you should build in some contingency to ensure you are prepared to deal with a greater than expected turnout and/or electorate. Whilst the number of tendered ballot papers to verify will likely be relatively small, you should also consider the number of tendered ballot papers you will need to manage and plan on how you will do this.

Volume and management of returned postal votes The publication of the revised register will provide a baseline for the number of postal voters in your area, and you should consider the percentage increase ahead of previous similar polls too. You should also factor in any registration activity being carried out by EROs ahead of the poll. Regular monitoring of the absent voting list will allow you to keep your estimate under review. In cross-boundary constituencies you will need to liaise with the ROs across the constituency to ensure your estimates for the whole of the constituency are robust. Using your assumption on postal voter turnout for the electoral area, you can then calculate the total number of postal ballot papers you might have to process. You can then keep this under review by monitoring the progress of postal vote returns in the period leading up to polling day and include an analysis of the pattern of postal vote returns from previous equivalent polls in your planning.

Planning for processing postal votes handed in on polling day The time taken to verify postal votes handed in at polling stations can lead to delays at the verification and count. You will need to plan how you will ensure that there are no delays due to awaiting the arrival and processing of the last postal votes. Regular collections of postal votes during the day should help to minimise any delay. You need to decide on the arrangements to enable the efficient verification of returned postal voting statements after the close of poll including whether: postal vote identifier checks will take place at the verification venue or elsewhere? If the process takes place at the verification venue this is likely to be more convenient for candidates and agents to observe and it will be more straightforward from a transportation point of view, but there are risks involved in moving an established operation and equipment to a different venue. equipment needs to be moved or additional equipment needs to be put in place to facilitate verification? If so, you should ensure that it is tested in advance you have the appropriate staffing levels to ensure any delay in verifying the final postal votes is minimised? You will need to decide how to manage the verification of identifiers on returned postal votes where you are not also the ERO or where, as a result of the relevant electoral area crossing boundaries, more than one ERO will hold the personal identifiers record containing the specimen signatures and dates of birth for some of the electorate. You will need to ensure that your plans for the checking of personal identifiers on returned postal voting statements received on polling day does not lead to a delay at the verification and count.

Managing doubtful ballot papers The number of doubtful

ballot papers that may require adjudication because the voter has not marked the ballot paper in accordance with the instructions will also affect the resources that might be required at the verification and count. By analysing the results of previous comparable elections you should be able to estimate how many doubtful ballot papers they may need to process at the count. Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Estimating the number of ballot papers](#) [Estimating the duration of your verification and count](#) [Attendance at the verification and count](#) [Attendance at the verification and count](#) As (A)RO, it is part of your role to ensure that everyone who wants to observe the verification and count has access to the information they need to enable them to do so. This section contains information on who can attend the verification and count, and guidance for your plans for communicating throughout the verification and count processes. Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Attendance at the verification and count](#) [Estimating the number of ballot papers](#) [Who can attend? Who can attend?](#) The following people are entitled by law to attend the verification and count: 1 you and your staff candidates one guest per candidate election agents (or a sub-agent on their behalf) counting agents Commission representatives accredited observers any other person permitted by you, as (A)RO, to attend You need to be satisfied that it will not impede the verification or efficient counting of votes and that you have either consulted the election agents or thought it impracticable to do so. 2 You should take all necessary steps to ensure that anyone attending does not interfere with or compromise the secrecy of the vote. You are legally required to make such arrangements as you think fit to ensure that all attendees are provided with a copy of the relevant secrecy requirements. 3 Secrecy requirements - verification and count (DOC) You have a legal duty to give counting agents reasonable facilities for overseeing the verification and counting of the votes. You should ensure that anyone who is entitled to attend has an unrestricted view of the proceedings, without being able to interfere with the work of your staff. 4 There is no requirement for those attending to arrive by a certain time. You should have a process in place to ensure that, those entitled to attend can be admitted whenever they arrive. This process should also allow any attendee who wishes to leave and return later to do so. 1. Schedule 1 rule 44(2) and (3) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) 2. Sch 1 rule 44(3) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) 3. S.66 and sch 1 rule 31(b) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 3](#) 4. Sch 1 rule 44(4) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 4](#) Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Who can attend?](#) [Attendance at the verification and count](#) [Counting agents](#) [Counting agents](#) You must give counting agents reasonable facilities for overseeing the verification and counting of the votes, and provide them with relevant information. In particular, the law requires that where votes are counted by sorting the ballot papers according to candidate and then counting each set of ballot papers, the counting agents are entitled to satisfy themselves that the ballot papers are correctly sorted. 1 You must also give notice in writing to counting agents of the time and place at which the verification and counting of votes will start. 2 Further information can be found in our guidance on the appointment of counting agents. 1. Schedule 1 rule 44(5) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ [Back to content at footnote 1](#) 2. Sch 1 rule 44(1) RPA 1983 ■ [Back to content at footnote 2](#) Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Counting agents](#) [Who can attend?](#) [Accredited observers and Commission representatives](#) [Accredited observers and Commission representatives](#) [Accredited observers](#) Electoral observation is a legitimate and valuable part of the electoral process, and care should be taken not to hinder or obstruct the conduct of any

observers. While you are permitted to remove an observer for misconduct, and/or limit the number of observers who may be present at any one time during the verification and count, 1 you should exercise caution in doing so. You are not entitled to bar all observers from the verification and count; only to limit the number of observers present at any one time, and you should apply this discretion reasonably. If you suspend access, or remove an accredited observer from the verification or count, you should ensure there is an audit trail to support your decision. A template observer access restrictions log is available for this purpose. Observer access restrictions log (DOC) When managing the attendance of observers you must have regard to the Commission's Code of practice for observers. 2 Should you experience any issues with observers attending the count, contact your local Commission team at the earliest opportunity. Observers at UK elections booklet - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Commission representatives Commission representatives are entitled to attend the verification and count and to observe your working practices. 3 They can ask questions of your staff and of agents, but will not do so if this would obstruct or disturb the conduct of proceedings. You are not allowed to limit the number of Commission representatives at the verification and count. 4 Further information can be found in our guidance on the appointment of accredited observers and Commissions representatives. 1. Section 6E(1) Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 ("PPERA 2000") ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S. 6F PERA 2000 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Sections 6A and 6B PERA 2000 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. S.6E(2) PERA 2000 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Accredited observers and Commission representatives Counting agents The media The media You should include space and opportunity for the media to report on the result of the election. You have discretion to decide which representatives of the media you allow to attend. 1 As with all attendees, you must ensure that media representatives do not interfere with the process or compromise the secrecy of the vote. 2 In preparation for representatives of the media attending your verification and count you should consider: contacting principal broadcast organisations in advance outlining the press facilities available arranging for sound systems to be used for the announcements and for any live feeds providing an opportunity for media representatives to inspect the verification and count venue to see what space and facilities are available, and give them the opportunity to raise any issues or requirements with you, including any technical requirements to avoid problems on the night and allow provision to be made in the layout of the venue how you will ensure that the media are aware of any restricted areas and procedures; e.g. that camera operators are aware they must not overview sensitive information (such as close-ups of ballot papers) or obstruct count staff Throughout the proceedings you should ensure that the media representatives are aware of: the arrangements for the declaration of results, such as alerting them shortly before the results are to be declared so they can move into position and providing them with written copies of the results. the arrangements for sound systems to be used for the announcements and for any live feeds and who to approach if they are asked any technical electoral questions the expected finish and declaration times for each poll, including arrangements where you are counting votes for more than one contest that there is a nominated media spokesperson for the count who will be available to deal with media enquiries If media representatives are accredited by the Commission as observers and are attending in such a capacity, they have the same rights and obligations as any other accredited observer. Like any other observers,

they are required to have regard to the Commission's Code of practice for observers and must abide by any decision that you make on the use of cameras and other recording equipment. 1 Observers at UK elections booklet - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. To assist you and your public relations team we have produced, jointly with the national TV news broadcasters, some tips for managing the media at the count. Tips on managing the media at the count (DOC) The Commission will produce a media handbook that you can include with any information pack you are producing for the media attending the verification and count. 1. Rule 44(2) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 a b 2. Rule 44(3) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for The media Accredited observers and Commission representatives Controlling admission and managing attendees Controlling admission and managing attendees Controlling admission You should provide lists of those persons entitled to attend at the entrance to the verification and count, and instruct security staff to check the tickets or passes of anyone arriving to attend. However, you should also brief security staff that Commission representatives and accredited observers do not need to provide advance notification of where they intend to observe and therefore may not appear on their list but are nevertheless entitled to access the verification and count venue on production of their observer or Commission representative identification badge. You should, for health, safety and security reasons, record the names of everyone who actually attends the verification and count. Further information can be found in our guidance on accredited observers and Commission representatives. You should liaise with the Police to check that their plans for managing the public space outside the count venue will enable people entitled to attend the count to enter and leave the venue freely and without obstruction. Managing attendees All attendees need to know what to expect and to understand their role at the verification and count. To support this, your plans should include mechanisms for communicating with and managing the expectations of those attending. The plans should also cover how you will maintain the secrecy of the vote throughout the verification and count. You should ensure that all attendees at the count, including candidates, their guests, election agents, counting agents and the media, are briefed on and fully understand the process for conducting the count and the standards of behaviour which are expected of them at all times. Your written and face-to-face briefings should make it clear that you will be excluding attendees from the count venue if their behaviour interferes with the effective conduct of the count. This should help count staff to carry out verification and count activities without interference from counting agents and other observers. You should also decide on a policy for the use of mobile phones and photography or filming in the verification and count venue and provide this information in advance to those who are entitled to attend. Tickets or entrance passes should be issued to everyone entitled to attend the count, except accredited observers and Commission representatives who will be wearing silver or pink accreditation badges. You should consider issuing different-coloured tickets or passes to identify the different categories of attendees. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Controlling admission and managing attendees The media Communication during the verification and count Communication during the verification and count Good communication, both at candidate and agent briefings in advance of the count and at the event itself, allows those present to properly scrutinise all of the processes and will help to build confidence in the administration of the verification

and count. Providing information on the process can also help to lower the number of queries raised by candidates and agents – in particular from new or inexperienced candidates – helping to reduce the pressure on staff. You should also ensure that there is always a way for agents or observers to make direct representations to you should they be concerned or dissatisfied in any way with the manner in which the proceedings are being carried out. Enabling such representations to be able to be made at the earliest opportunity is important so that any concerns may be considered, explanations and reassurances given, and any corrective action taken if necessary.

Verbal announcements You should use a public address system to make announcements about what is happening where and when throughout the verification and count process. These should be timely and co-ordinated to ensure that information is communicated in a way that allows candidates, agents and observers to fully understand the progress of the count. You could make announcements: when you have received all the ballot boxes from polling stations when you have received all the boxes of postal votes when you have completed verification to confirm the turnout figure and how many ballot papers are going through to the count when you are about to start the adjudication of doubtful ballot papers, setting out where this will take place when you are ready to announce the results so attendees can make their way to the declaration area to notify attendees of any delays At standalone elections, if you have decided to start counting the votes while the verification is still taking place, you should ensure you inform those attending of this. It is helpful to also have a dedicated member of staff available to brief any attendees who arrive after the verification or count has commenced as they may have missed your announcements. Signage throughout the venue You should have adequate signage in the venue so that attendees can find their way to the various areas. In particular, if the public address system can only be heard in certain parts of the venue, you should let attendees know where announcements can be heard, through clear signage and by including this information in packs for attendees. You should consider displaying copies of the layout plan at various locations throughout the venue, indicating key areas of interest for counting agents and observers. You could also provide a description of the roles of counting agents and an explanation of what other guests are permitted to do, as well as photographs of yourself and your key staff to help attendees identify you at the count.

Information pack for attendees You should provide an information pack for attendees which could include information on: the key roles of those conducting the verification and count (including names and photographs of you and your key team) the local verification and count processes all ballot box numbers and the name of the polling stations they relate to the security arrangements for the ballot papers and boxes the relationship, where applicable, between the count in your electoral area and the election as a whole the template verification and count paperwork, including a copy of it, that will be used to communicate the outcome of the verification and count how agents can observe and participate in the adjudication of doubtful ballot papers the venue facilities and general rules including that smoking is not allowed within the building, and any policy regarding refreshments, use of mobile phones and taking photographs any other health and safety issues e.g. evacuation procedures and fire drills where attendees can get further information The information pack should also make clear to those attending the count that they should communicate any questions via count supervisors rather than counting assistants. This will help to ensure transparency of communication between counting staff and other attendees at the count (including counting agents). You should brief senior staff on how to respond to queries from attendees. Communicating the results You will need to

announce the declaration of the final results verbally. You are also required to give public notice of the results and the relevant election rules will set out what should be included in that notice. You should provide copies of the results for candidates, agents and the media. Additionally, you should make arrangements for the results to be published on the local authority's web site as soon as possible. You can also share the results link through your council's social media accounts. Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Communication during the verification and count

Controlling admission and managing attendees

Verification

Verification

The verification process has two main purposes which are: to ensure and demonstrate that all ballot papers issued at polling stations and all returned postal ballot papers have been brought to the count, and to provide the figure with which the count outcome must reconcile. You should keep both of these purposes in mind when conducting the verification process. Ensuring accuracy at the verification stage is crucial to ensuring a timely count. If the verification figures are wrong there will be a variance against the count figures which will need to be resolved and which risks significantly slowing the overall process. Last updated: 30 March 2023

Book traversal links for Verification

Communication during the verification and count

Receipt of ballot boxes and other materials

Receipt of ballot boxes and other materials

The correct and orderly receipt of ballot boxes and materials from polling stations is a key component of an accurate verification process. You need to decide the most effective arrangements for receiving ballot boxes and other materials. Making assumptions on the timings for the delivery of ballot boxes will help you to ensure that: staff receiving ballot boxes from polling stations will be able to alert ROs if any box(es) are overdue as this may indicate a problem either for an individual Presiding Officer or a wider problem affecting a number of Presiding Officers. Your estimated timings for the completion of the verification stage are informed by your estimated timing of when the last ballot boxes for the poll are likely to arrive. You should be able to estimate when each ballot box is expected to arrive at the verification venue, while recognising the potential for delays as a result of possible queues at the polling station at the close of poll or other factors such as adverse weather etc. Your analysis of previous polls will provide valuable information to assist and there are also many websites and apps that will calculate the time it takes to travel between a polling station and the verification venue. You can also establish the average time it takes for a Presiding Officer to complete the relevant forms and package up materials following the close of poll by considering experience at previous polls or by carrying out an exercise to time the process in practice. You will need to ensure that Presiding Officers can get ballot boxes securely and efficiently to the verification venue so that the verification and counting processes can be commenced as quickly as possible. You will need to consider the geography and transport links of the electoral area and the particular characteristics of the chosen venue (for example, car parking, access roads, etc.).

Using collection points

One option may be to receive polling station materials from Presiding Officers at one or more locations ('collection points') and then transport the materials in bulk to the verification venue. You will need to decide if the use of collection points may speed up overall receipt of the polling station materials at the verification venue. If you adopt this approach, you will need to put in place robust arrangements to ensure the correct and orderly receipt of ballot boxes and materials from polling stations at the collection points. If possible, staff receiving the ballot boxes should also undertake a cursory check of the ballot paper accounts, including the basic arithmetic, before the Presiding Officers are allowed

to depart. The ballot boxes and other materials from polling stations would then need to be securely transported to the verification venue. See ensuring the security of ballot papers and other materials for further guidance on this. If you decide to use collection points, a further check that everything delivered to the collection points by Presiding Officers has also been received at the verification and count venue would be advisable. You will need to include the time it would take to complete these checks when calculating the potential efficiencies of using collection points and weigh up these factors in reaching any decision.

Number of ballot boxes You will need to plan for how many ballot boxes you will receive at the verification and count. This will be determined by your calculation of how many ballot papers a ballot box can hold depending on the size of the ballot paper or ballot papers and therefore how many ballot boxes will be supplied to polling stations. For more information see our section on equipment and materials to be provided for the polling station.

Combination If permitted by the relevant election rules, you will need to decide whether to use a single ballot box at the polling station or separate ballot boxes for each of the polls. The use of a single box means that the various ballot papers for the different elections will need to be separated at the verification. In the case of separate boxes the ballot papers will arrive at the verification already separated, save for any papers mistakenly posted in the 'wrong' box at polling stations. There is nothing to suggest that either approach results in a significantly quicker verification, but you may wish to undertake a practical exercise to test this locally in order to provide an evidence base for any decision. There are, however, some other advantages to using a single box, for example: it may be more straightforward for the voter in the polling station it requires less management by staff in the polling station it can mean fewer ballot boxes to be transported to the verification venue

Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Receipt of ballot boxes and other materials](#)

Verification Contingency planning for delays

Contingency planning for delays You should be aware of any live issues which may affect the transportation of ballot boxes to the verification venue, for example severe weather or road closures, and will need to decide what contingency measures are appropriate. You will need to monitor the situation on polling day and be able to take operational decisions to deal with situations as they may arise, such as vehicle breakdown. You will also need to decide what communication protocols will be for drivers to alert you to any delays.

Queues at the close of poll The provision to allow those in queues at the close of poll to cast a vote could potentially cause delays if polling stations are operating beyond 10pm. You need to decide what mechanisms you are going to put in place to minimise any delays should this situation occur. You should also have in place communication protocols so that you can be immediately alerted in the event of queues arising. This will enable you to make an early assessment of the likely delay and adjust the verification as necessary, for example by re-allocating resources.

Last updated: 31 May 2023 [Book traversal links for Contingency planning for delays](#)

Receipt of ballot boxes and other materials

The Presiding Officer handover of ballot boxes

The Presiding Officer handover of ballot boxes Whether Presiding Officers transport the ballot boxes to the verification and count venue or hand them over at a drop off point, you should make clear to the staff receiving the ballot boxes that no Presiding Officer should be allowed to leave until their ballot box(es) and all of the documents and packets have been received and checked off by the designated staff member and, wherever possible, a cursory check of the ballot paper account has been made. You should instruct staff receiving ballot boxes to ensure that they have the ballot paper account for each ballot box. If

Presiding Officers are bringing multiple ballot boxes to the verification venue/or collection point, you should provide staff to assist the Presiding Officer in transporting all ballot boxes and accompanying materials into the verification venue or collection point in one trip. You should also record the time of arrival of each ballot box, so you can use this information for future reference. Your process should ensure that anything missing can be quickly identified and action can be taken to locate the missing items. You will also need to ensure that you have processes in place to ensure the security of any personal data included on the ballot papers and other paperwork from the polling station. You should collate the details of all the polling stations in advance, together with the names and mobile phone numbers of each Presiding Officer so that you can easily contact Presiding Officers in the event of any problems. Presiding Officers should record any issues for you to consider, if required, at the verification and count. Your team of staff receiving materials from polling stations should use a checklist to ensure that you accurately account for all ballot boxes and ballot paper accounts, as well as any packets containing postal votes handed in at polling stations. We have prepared a checklist for you to print out and use during the verification: Checklist of items the Presiding Officer should hand in at the verification venue (or collection point) (DOC) Combination Combination Where polls have been combined and separate ballot boxes have been used for each poll, you will need to produce further checklists to track the boxes and their accompanying paperwork for the other poll(s). Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for The Presiding Officer handover of ballot boxes Contingency planning for delays Receipt and management of ballot papers and election material at the verification Receipt and management of ballot papers and election material at the verification You should have a team of trained staff responsible for registering receipt of every ballot box, the postal votes and the other materials that have been delivered from polling stations. You should organise the packets and parcels from polling stations so that you can easily locate any packet. The sacks containing the documents that need to be stored, such as sealed corresponding number lists, need to be separated from those containing items that will be reused, such as general stationery items. You can then release the various materials received back from polling stations to the receiving staff in the relevant teams, to enable verification of the unused ballot papers and the opening of postal votes to commence. These processes can run simultaneously to the verification of used votes. The following table summarises the action you should take for each type of sealed packet received:

Sealed packets received	Action to take
Ballot paper accounts	Take the ballot paper accounts to staff dealing with the ballot box verification process to enter onto the statement as to the result of verification
Spoilt and unused ballot papers	Open, count and reseal all packets
1 Supply the number counted to the verification staff	
Tendered ballot papers and tendered votes list	Do not open the sealed packets of tendered ballot papers
2 Open and reseal the packet containing the tendered votes list and check it against the ballot paper accounts	
3 Corresponding number lists	
Certificates of employment	Marked copies of the register
Lists of proxies	Do not open these packets
4 Keep them sealed and placed in a designated and secure area for the duration of the verification and count	
Postal ballots handed in at the polling station	You will need to undertake the final opening of postal votes handed in at polling stations
	You may do this either at the verification venue or at some other premises. In either case, you need to have a mechanism to record the number of postal votes received
	In line with your document retention policy, you should ensure that: the materials that you must keep sealed are placed in a designated and secure area

for the duration of the verification and count any personal data is destroyed at the appropriate time 1. Schedule 1 rule 45(5) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 rule 54(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Sch 1 rule 45(5) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Sch 1 rule 54(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Receipt and management of ballot papers and election material at the verification The Presiding Officer handover of ballot boxes Receipt of sealed boxes of postal ballot papers at the verification Receipt of sealed boxes of postal ballot papers at the verification You should bring any postal ballot papers previously received, opened and processed to the verification and count venue in sealed ballot boxes, with an accompanying ballot paper account for each postal ballot box. You need to decide on the most effective arrangements for the delivery and receipt of sealed boxes of postal ballot papers from all of the postal vote opening sessions. Staff receiving the postal ballot boxes should use a checklist to ensure that all postal ballot boxes and postal ballot paper accounts are accurately accounted for. You must verify all packets and ballot boxes containing postal ballot papers in the same way as any ballot box from a polling station. As these will often be some of the first boxes being verified, they present an opportunity to create confidence in the process and in the count as a whole. 1 1. Schedule 1 rule 45(1) and (5)Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Receipt of sealed boxes of postal ballot papers at the verification Receipt and management of ballot papers and election material at the verification Ensuring the security of ballot papers and other materials Ensuring the security of ballot papers and other materials You should take all necessary steps to ensure the security of ballot papers and relevant stationery from close of poll through to the declaration of the result, particularly where ballot papers need to be transported from the verification to the count or where a break in proceedings will require the ballots to be stored between the conclusion of the verification and the commencement of the count. 1 If you need to store ballot papers, you must store them in sealed ballot boxes in a secure place, allowing agents to attach their seals to the ballot boxes. 2 You should always open the sealed ballot boxes in clear view of any candidates and agents present, so they can satisfy themselves that nobody has interfered with the ballot papers and the ballot boxes. You can liaise with your local police Single Point of Contact (SPOC) when deciding on the most appropriate method for ensuring secure storage, and should ensure you brief candidates and agents about your arrangements, so that they can have confidence in the integrity of the count. You will also need to ensure any personal data is destroyed at the appropriate time, in accordance with your document retention policy . Risk assessments You need to ensure you have processes appropriate to the risk in place to ensure a level of security of personal data included on the ballot papers and other paperwork from the polling station. As part of your contingency planning you have considered security risks and included them on your risk register. Security risks may vary within the electoral area and you may need to take a different approach in particular instances. Further information can be found in the guidance on planning for the verification and count. 1. Schedule 1 rule 45(7) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 rule 43(1) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Ensuring the security of ballot papers and other materials Receipt of sealed boxes of postal ballot papers at the verification Secure transport of the ballot boxes and other materials Secure transport of the ballot boxes and

other materials In conjunction with your police SPOC, you should decide how you will ensure that ballot boxes and other materials are transported securely to the verification and count. As part of this, you will need to assess if you have any areas of high risk which may, for example, require a police escort, security van or additional personnel to transfer the ballot boxes from the polling station to the verification venue/collection point following the close of poll. Security in transit You should ensure that Presiding Officers are clear about the rules and processes following the close of poll, including in relation to sealing the ballot boxes.

Guidance on this is contained in the Commission's polling station handbook. You should make clear to Presiding Officers that they should never leave the ballot boxes or other materials unattended and that, if they themselves are delivering the ballot boxes and materials to a collection point or the verification venue, that they should take steps to ensure their security throughout the journey, for example by locking their car doors and following any specific police advice. If the venue for counting the votes is different from the verification venue you must seal the relevant ballot papers into ballot boxes or another suitable container, and allow agents to attach their seals. You must comply with any requirements in the election rules such as endorsing a description of the area to which the ballot papers relate on the ballot boxes and ensuring that all the required materials and paperwork are delivered to the count venue along with the ballot papers. At the count venue, you should have robust arrangements to check in all the materials and paperwork delivered to ensure that nothing is missing. Security at verification venue You should make arrangements for how the ballot papers and other materials will be kept secure once they arrive at the verification and count venue(s), for example, by ensuring they are never left unattended. These plans should also include the security of those materials that you must keep sealed (such as the corresponding numbers list), either by staff watching the materials or by securing them in a locked room. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Secure transport of the ballot boxes and other materials

Ensuring the security of ballot papers and other materials Securing ballot papers during breaks in proceedings Securing ballot papers during breaks in proceedings Where there is a break in proceedings, you will need to seal ballot papers in ballot boxes or another suitable container and store them securely during the break. On completion of the verification, you should place the ballot papers for any contests which are not being counted immediately after verification into ballot boxes which are then sealed. You must allow any agents present to attach their seals. In order to ensure the security of the ballot papers you could consider: storing them in sealed ballot boxes in a locked room, ensuring that you have control of all the keys to that facility arranging for security staff to guard the ballot boxes at all times until the verification/count resumes You should liaise with your police SPOC when deciding on the most appropriate method for ensuring secure storage. Once the verification/count has resumed, you should open the sealed ballot boxes in clear view of any candidates and agents present, so they can satisfy themselves that nobody has interfered with the ballot boxes or ballot papers. Combination Combination Where polls are combined it is likely that there will be a break in proceedings between the conclusion of the verification and the commencement of the count for one or more of the elections/contests. During that break, you will need to store the ballot papers securely. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Securing ballot papers during breaks in proceedings Secure transport of the ballot boxes and other materials Securing ballot papers in the event of evacuation from the venue Securing ballot papers in the event of evacuation from the venue Occasionally incidents occur

during verification and count which may require the evacuation of the venue, either permanently or until the situation has been resolved. Obviously, in these circumstances, the safety of attendees is paramount but certain situations may not pose an immediate risk to the safety of staff. Having pre-prepared evacuation plans in place can help to maintain the integrity of the verification and count processes and the security of the ballot papers. In the case of an urgent evacuation it may be possible to secure the ballot papers which are still on the tables by locking up the venue or storing them within a locked room in the venue. In that case, you will need to have control of all the keys to that room or to the venue. If you have more time it may be possible to place the ballot papers in ballot boxes and then seal the ballot boxes (inviting agents to affix their seals if possible) and then securing the sealed boxes within the venue. Sometimes the situation will mean that if the ballot papers are left in the venue they are likely to be damaged. In these situations it may be possible for the ballot papers to be secured within ballot boxes and removed from the venue by staff and taken to a place of safety until the verification and count can resume. In these circumstances, you will benefit from having a clear protocol for sealing the ballot papers within ballot boxes and clear labelling of those boxes. You should also consider how you would ensure the secure transportation of ballot boxes and their subsequent storage in these circumstances. Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Securing ballot papers in the event of evacuation](#)
[from the venue](#)
[Securing ballot papers during breaks in proceedings](#)
[The verification process](#)
[The verification process](#)
[The verification of the used, unused and spoilt ballot papers](#) is a legal requirement, and is central to the declaration of accurate results.

- 1 You must verify each ballot paper account and draw up a statement as to the result of the verification.
- 2 This is a record of the number of ballot papers expected and the number of ballot papers counted, along with an explanation for any variances. Any agent may make a copy of this, and you should make copies available for the agents present once verification has been completed.
- 3 The verification statement is a key communication tool that will help to ensure that candidates and agents are confident that the processes at the verification and count are transparent and that they will produce an accurate result. As with all aspects of the verification and count process, transparency is key and the process followed should be clear to all present. The key stages of the verification process are described in the following table:

Stage	Action to follow
Opening the packets of unused ballot papers	Staff must open the packets of unused ballot papers and ascertain the number of ballot papers that were not issued by noting the number of books and number of ballot papers remaining in any part book of ballot papers inside the packet
The packets of spoilt ballot papers must also be opened and counted	Both unused and spoilt ballot papers must be resealed after they have been counted
4 Opening the ballot boxes	Staff must break the seals and open the ballot boxes in the presence of any counting agents and observers that are present.
5 If candidates and agents are not present, you do not have to wait for them to arrive in order to break the seals	When a box has had a seal attached by an agent at the close of the poll, particular care should be taken to show to any agents and observers present that this seal is still intact prior to it being broken
The ballot papers should be carefully tipped onto the table, ensuring that none have fallen onto the floor and that the box is empty	6 You have a legal duty to keep the ballot papers face up at all times during the verification and count
7 You should show the empty box to the agents and observers so that they can be satisfied that it is indeed empty	Organising the ballot papers
The counting assistants should then unfold the ballot papers and count them	

into bundles Accuracy at this stage is vital, so bundles should be passed to another assistant for rechecking Any tendered ballot papers that have been mistakenly placed in the ballot box during the day should be removed and handed to the supervisor

Reconciling the papers The totals given on the ballot paper account must be compared against the number of ballot papers counted and recorded as being present inside the ballot box You must compare the unused and spoilt ballot papers, as well as the tendered votes list, against the figures on each ballot paper account The total number of ballot papers in the ballot box should agree with the total on the ballot paper account, and reconcile with the total number of unused ballot papers

8 Cross-checking processes It is easy for simple arithmetic or transposition errors to be made, particularly when people become tired. You therefore need to put in place processes to mitigate this risk, such as ensuring that the recording of figures and every calculation is checked by more than one person. The ballot papers are placed into bundles at various stages of the verification and it is important that procedures are put in place to double-check that the bundles have the correct number of ballot papers in them and, at the count stage, that they contain no more votes than the maximum allowed. This will be crucial to the accuracy of the verification and count. You should make staff aware of this during briefings/training and senior staff should be alert to this at all times and intervene immediately if this is not being done.

1. Schedule 1 rule 45 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. Sch 1 rule 45(5) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. Sch 1 rule 45(5) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3

4. Sch 1 rule 45(5) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4

5. Sch 1 rule 45(1) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5

6. Sch 1 rule 45(5) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 6

7. Sch 1 rule 45(6) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 7

8. Sch 1 rule 45(1) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 8

Last updated: 29 September 2023

Book traversal links for The verification process

Securing ballot papers in the event of evacuation from the venue

If the ballot paper account does not reconcile

If the ballot paper account does not reconcile

If a ballot paper account does not reconcile, you should undertake the procedure as outlined in the following table and document the outcome on the verification statement:

Step	Action to take
Preliminary checks	Make a full check of the arithmetic on the ballot paper account and the number of unused ballot papers
	Check the other packets of returned materials and any polling station logbook to try to identify any reason for missing or additional ballot papers
	Ensure that returned postal ballots have not been added to the number of votes cast in the polling station
	You should consider contacting the Presiding Officer to ask them to try to explain any discrepancies
Check number of ballot boxes issued	Check the record of issued ballot boxes to see if more than one ballot box was issued to the polling station and ensure that all boxes allocated to the station are opened and accounted for
Check for compensating errors	Check the ballot boxes for all polling stations within the same polling place
	The verification of the ballot paper accounts for the other polling stations within that location may indicate a compensating error due to electors placing their ballot paper in the 'wrong' box or in a box from the wrong polling station
	If the compensating errors all balance, the verification can be deemed to have been successful
Recount the ballot papers	If the ballot box is from a single polling station or if there is no compensating error in the figures from the other polling station(s) in that polling place, recount the ballot papers in the box at least twice or until the same figure is achieved on two consecutive occasions
Re-verify the totals	If, after following the procedures outlined above, any discrepancy still remains, use the number of ballot papers counted and recounted by the count

staff as the verified figure and make an appropriate note on the ballot paper account. Confirm any variance on your records. Add the verified total and the variance between that and the number on the ballot paper account to the statement as to the result of the verification, if possible with an explanation of why that variance has occurred, and discuss this with any agents and observers present. We have produced a check list for the steps to take when dealing with ballot box variances. Checklist when dealing with ballot box variances (DOC) Combination Combination Check the ballot boxes for all election types for all polling stations within the same polling place. The verification of the ballot paper accounts for the other polling stations within that location may indicate a compensating error due to electors placing their ballot paper in the wrong box or in a box from the wrong polling station. If the compensating errors all balance, the verification can be deemed to have been successful. Wherever possible you should verify all of the boxes from the same polling place location simultaneously at adjacent tables, or one immediately after the other. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for If the ballot paper account does not reconcile The verification process Completion of verification Completion of verification Verification can only be completed once all postal ballot papers, including those received at polling stations, have been opened and processed, and have been through the verification process. Verification statement You must ensure that the verification statement containing the result of the verification of each ballot box is completed. The statement must in each case include the total number of postal ballot papers and the total number of ballot papers verified for the poll. You should sign the statements. Any agent may make a copy of the statement as to the result of the verification and, to promote confidence in the result, you should make copies available for the agents present once verification has been completed. 1 If, on completion of verification, you do not proceed immediately to the counting of the votes, you should place the ballot papers and other documents in secure packets under your own seal and the seals of any agents present who wish to affix their own seals. 2 You should take all necessary steps to ensure the security of the ballot papers and the relevant stationery during any break in the verification and count proceedings. Further information can be found in our guidance on ensuring the security of ballot boxes. 1. Schedule 1 rule 45(5) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 rule 45(7) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Completion of verification If the ballot paper account does not reconcile The count The count Count staff should arrive at the times agreed by you in advance and should check the count stationery and equipment is present, using our checklist to assist. You should ensure that staff are checked in and that you brief them as necessary to ensure smooth delivery of the count. You must have taken reasonable steps to begin counting the votes as soon as practicable within four hours of the close of poll. The fact that there may be voters waiting in a queue to cast their vote does not alter the fact that close of poll continues to be 10pm. This means that you will need to have taken all reasonable steps to start the count by 2am, even if voters are waiting in a queue at 10pm. 1 At stand-alone polls, you do not have to wait until you have completed the verification, before you can start counting the votes. 2 What to do if you are unable to start the count within four hours of the close of poll If you do not commence counting the votes within four hours of the close of poll you must publish and deliver to the Commission a statement setting out the time at which counting did begin, the steps you had taken to comply with the duty and the reasons why the counting of votes had not commenced by 2am. You must also publish the statement,

which should include making it available on the local authority's website. We have produced a template statement for those (A)ROs who do not commence counting within four hours of the close of poll and you can access this from our resources page for this section. 3 It is important that you keep a record of all steps taken in order to provide an audit trail demonstrating your decision making processes. If you consider that all reasonable steps have been taken and that a further step is not reasonable, you should keep a record of your consideration and why you have decided it would not be reasonable. You should be able to explain your decisions, and should be prepared to do so in response to enquiries. The statement should include the: name of constituency name of (Acting) Returning Officer date and time (in 24 hour format, e.g. 03:45) at which the counting of the votes given on the ballot papers began description of the steps taken to ensure the counting of votes commenced within 4 hours of the close of poll (Acting) Returning Officer's explanation for why the counting of the votes did not commence by 2am You should send statements to your local Commission team, preferably by e-mail, and must send them by not later than 30 calendar days of the declaration of result. We are legally required to publish in our statutory report on the election a list of all constituencies where counting did not begin within the prescribed timescale. 1. Schedule 1 rule 45(3A) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Paragraph 22(1AB) The Representation of the People (Combination of Polls) (England and Wales) Regulations 2004 (Combination of Polls Rules) ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Sch 1 rule 45(8) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for The count Completion of verification Counting the votes Counting the votes You should open all boxes in full view of any agents that are present. When a box has had a seal attached by an agent, you should take particular care to show to any agents present that this seal is still intact prior to it being broken. All count processes should be transparent. You should also provide appropriate opportunities for those who are entitled to observe and to object to doubtful ballot paper adjudication decisions. This should include ensuring that you store bundles of counted ballot papers in full sight of counting agents to allow them to monitor progress throughout the count. Mixing You must mix the ballot papers so that ballot papers from each ballot box are mixed with ballot papers from at least one other ballot box, and mix the postal ballot papers with ballot papers from at least one other ballot box before sorting and counting the votes. 1 Sorting and counting Ballot papers must be kept face upwards throughout the counting process in order to prevent the number and other unique identifying mark on the back of the ballot paper being seen. The ballot papers should be visible at all times to any candidates, agents and observers present. 2 Counting assistants should sort the ballot papers into votes for each candidate. Any doubtful ballot papers should be placed aside for adjudication. The number of votes given for each candidate should then be counted and placed into bundles of a predetermined number, e.g., bundles of 20, 25, 50 or 100. They should attach a slip bearing the candidate's name, together with the number of ballot papers in the bundle, to the front. It may be helpful to colour-code the slips. The bundles should then be recounted by another counting assistant in order to ensure the accuracy of the bundle. Supervisors should flick through the bundles in order to ensure that all of the votes in the bundle are marked in the same way before removing them from the counting staff. It is unlikely that the number of votes in the final bundle will equal the predetermined bundle number, and so you should make a note of the number of votes in those incomplete bundles and attached to the front of the bundle. You should set aside any doubtful ballot papers for adjudication. 1. Schedule

1 rule 45(1A) Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 rule 45(4) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Counting the votes The count Doubtful ballot papers Doubtful ballot papers You should adjudicate doubtful ballot papers regularly as the count proceeds: you should not leave this until the end of the count. You should have regard to the Commission's booklet on doubtful ballot papers, provided below, throughout the adjudication process. The booklet contains examples of allowed and rejected votes and the key principles to be followed in the adjudication of doubtful ballot papers and can be accessed from our resources page for this section. You can also find examples of allowed and rejected ballot papers on the doubtful ballot paper placemat , which you should have on display at the count for candidates, agents and observers to refer to. Adjudicating doubtful ballot papers When adjudicating doubtful ballot papers, you should: always be clear and consistent take time to ensure that a considered decision is given in every case determine whether the intention of the voter clearly appears on the ballot paper As part of this, you will need to: consider the whole of the ballot paper consider whether the way a ballot paper has been marked means that a vote for one candidate is clearly apparent The legislation provides that you must reject a ballot paper: 1 that does not bear the official mark (not the unique identifying mark) on which votes are given for more than one candidate on which anything is written or marked by which the voter can be identified (except the printed ballot paper number or other unique identifying mark) that is unmarked or void for uncertainty However, the legislation states that unless the way the ballot paper is marked identifies the voter, a ballot paper must not be rejected if the voter's intention is clear if the vote is marked: 2 elsewhere than in the proper place otherwise than by means of a cross, or by more than one mark In addition, ballot papers may require further consideration where there is: anything unusual about it (for example, any ballot paper that appears to have been altered, either with a clearly different writing instrument or with correction fluid) any tears or damage to the ballot paper Ballot papers that are torn or damaged are able to be accepted as a valid vote as long as the paper still contains the official mark and the intention of the voter is clear and none of the other grounds for rejection apply. You can find further information in our guidance on how to deal with cut ballot papers at postal vote openings. You must decide on the validity of all doubtful ballot papers in the presence of candidates, agents and observers. Those that are subsequently declared as valid must be counted and included in the total number of votes cast for the appropriate candidate(s) or party (as applicable) at the election. Recording rejected ballot papers Your decision on any question arising in respect of a ballot paper is final and can only be challenged by way of an election petition. 3 You must draw up a statement showing the number of ballot papers rejected and for what reason. You should therefore have a system in place throughout the adjudication process for sorting the rejected ballot papers into the following headings: 4 want of official mark voting for more than one candidate writing or mark by which voter could be identified unmarked or void for uncertainty You should have regard to the Commission's guidance to ensure accurate and consistent categorisation of rejection for reporting on the statement. You must ensure that you mark each rejected ballot paper with the word 'rejected' and must add the words 'rejection objected to' if a counting agent objects to your decision. Although observers should be able to observe this process, unlike agents, they do not have the legal right to object to the rejection of a ballot paper. 5 You should place a copy of the rejection statement in the package for rejected ballot papers. 1. Schedule 1 rule 47(1)

Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 rule 47(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Sch 1 rule 48 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Sch 1 rule 47(4) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Sch 1 rule 47(3) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Doubtful ballot papers Counting the votes Reconciliation of count totals Reconciliation of count totals Once all of the ballot papers have been sorted and any doubtful ballots adjudicated, the key task of reconciliation can begin. You must count all of the bundles and part bundles of ballot papers showing a valid vote for each candidate. You must then add the total for each candidate to the total number of rejected ballot papers. This total figure should match exactly the figure giving the total number of ballot papers obtained at the end of the verification process. If the two figures agree you should proceed to the process of consulting the candidates and agents on the provisional result . 1 Procedure for unreconciled results You should be satisfied that the results or totals (as appropriate) reflect the ballots received. If the figures do not reconcile, you should take steps in order to identify and rectify the discrepancy such as: checking the storage area and check to ensure that all ballot boxes have been opened and are empty checking all floors and surfaces for ballot papers that may have been dropped in the count venue re-checking the verification figures and reconciliation for calculation mistakes ensuring that all rejected ballot papers have been accounted for checking that all bundles and part bundles have been counted consider recounting the ballot papers in the bundles You should also carry out any other checks you deem necessary. 1. Schedule 1 rule 45(5) Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Reconciliation of count totals Doubtful ballot papers Provisional results and recounts Provisional results and recounts You should be satisfied that the number of votes for each candidate is accurate before proceeding to a provisional result. All processes should be undertaken within the framework of maximum openness and transparency implemented throughout the various stages of the count so that all candidates and agents can have confidence in the processes and the provisional result you provide. Once you are satisfied, you must advise candidates and election agents of the provisional result and seek their agreement on the announcement of the result. 1 You should make clear that the candidates and agents are entitled to request a recount. You must give the candidates and agents sufficient time to digest the provisional result before proceeding with the declaration. It is at this point that any candidate or election agent may request to have the votes recounted or, following a recount, recounted again. 2 You must consider any recount request but by law may refuse if, in your opinion, the request is unreasonable. 3 You may, however, consider offering the candidates and agents the opportunity to inspect the bundles of ballot papers as a means of reassuring them that the result is accurate. Recount procedures If you agree to recount the votes, you should inform the candidates and agents present at the count before the recount commences and brief them on the processes you are going to follow. As with the original count, you should carry out any recount in full view of those present. You are entitled to reconsider which ballot papers should be rejected during the recount (or any further recount). You must consult candidates and agents on the revised provisional result in the same way as they were consulted on the provisional result at the conclusion of the first count. 4 It is possible to have more than one recount. Again, it is for you to consider any request, and you may refuse if in your opinion the request is unreasonable. 1. Schedule 1 rule 46 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2.

Sch 1 rule 46(2) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Sch 1 rule 46(1) RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Sch 1 rule 46 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Provisional results and recounts Reconciliation of count totals Equality of votes Equality of votes When two or more candidates have the same number of votes, and the addition of a vote would entitle any of those candidates to be declared elected, you must decide between the candidates by lot. 1 Whichever candidate wins the lot is treated as though they had received an additional vote that enables them to be declared elected. If a candidate is already elected with a majority, you do not need to draw lots to reconcile an equality of votes between other candidates further down the list of results. The method of drawing lots is for you to decide. Examples of types of lot include: ballot papers, each marked with a vote for one of the candidates with the same number of votes, placed in a container, such as an empty ballot box, mixed around, and then one drawn by you slips of paper with the candidates' names on them, placed in sealed envelopes, shuffled and then drawn by you You should make an announcement that you intend to proceed with the drawing of lots between the candidates having an equal number of votes, explaining precisely what is about to happen and the method to be used. Candidates, agents, Commission representatives and accredited observers should be present during any preparation and the actual drawing of lots. For example, if you use the first method described above, you should, in full view of any candidates and agents, and in the presence of Commission representatives and accredited observers, fold and place a previously counted ballot paper for each of the candidates with the same number of votes in an empty ballot box. An assistant should raise the box to a height where you are unable to see the papers inside the box, but are still able to reach inside to pick one. After mixing, you should draw one of the ballot papers from the box, open it, and read the name of the candidate with the vote marked against their name out loud. That candidate is then adjudged to have been allotted an additional vote. Similar preparations should be made should you decide to use any other method of drawing lots. A statement should be added to the result sheet to the effect that: Following an equality of votes, lots were drawn and, as a consequence, an additional vote was allotted to candidate [insert candidates name]' 1. Schedule 1 rule 49 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Equality of votes Provisional results and recounts Declaring the results Declaring the results You must prepare a statement setting out the name of each candidate, the total number of votes given for each candidate and the number of rejected ballot papers given under each heading. 1 Once you have prepared the statement, you must declare the result of the election. When planning for the declaration of result you should: decide on the exact location in the count venue where public announcements and the declaration will take place and who will be on the platform at this time ensure that the platform is accessible for all those who need to get up on it consider if you can make use of the display boards to provide a suitable backdrop for the announcement of results check any equipment that you will use for the announcement before the proceedings begin double-check that the result is accurate, and that it is written in the form of words for oral delivery in order to avoid any errors - you may need to repeat the declaration so that those in attendance are able to hear the detail clearly, particularly where there is noise from those attending consider how you will provide media representatives in attendance with a written copy of the results at the time the announcement is made as this will help them to ensure that their transmission of figures is accurate make sure that you follow the requirement to provide public

notice of the name of the candidate elected, the total number of votes given to each candidate and the number of rejected ballot papers under each heading 2 When a candidate has used their commonly used name to stand in an election, you should use both their full name and their commonly used name when declaring the result. Once you have declared the result at the count, it is final and cannot be amended. You should therefore take care to ensure that the result you declare is accurate. However, if you make an error in your oral announcement you can correct this, provided it is done immediately. Further information can be found in our guidance on providing notice of the result. 1. Schedule 1 rule 50 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Sch 1 rule 50 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Declaring the results Equality of votes Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Verification and Count Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Verification and Count Checklist when dealing with ballot box variances (DOC) Doubtful ballot paper placemat (UK Parliamentary elections) Doubtful ballot paper booklet (UK Parliamentary elections) Example checklist of materials required at the verification and count (DOC) Observer access restrictions log (DOC) Observers at UK elections booklet - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Secrecy requirements - count - S66 Tips on managing the media at the count (DOC) Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Verification and Count Declaring the results After the election After the election This guidance is designed to support you with the activities you are required to complete after the declaration of the result. You will find guidance on the immediate actions you need to take with regard to giving formal notice of the result and return of the writ, guidance to support you in managing the storage and retention of election documents as well as information on access and supply. We have included contact information in relation to accounting for the election, details about the collection of candidates' election spending returns, and the actions required with that process. Finally this guidance includes information about challenges to the election result and the petition process. As there are some differences in the role of the RO and ERO between England, Scotland and Wales, these are highlighted as appropriate throughout this section of the guidance. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for After the election Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - Verification and Count Providing notice of the result Providing notice of the result You must give public notice of the name of the candidate elected, the total number of votes given to each candidate and the number of rejected ballot papers under each heading. 1 When a candidate has used their commonly used name to stand in the election, you should use both their full name and the commonly used name when declaring the result. You should ensure that the notice of results is made available to all interested parties as soon as possible, including by publishing it on your local authority's website. Return of the writ After the declaration of the result, you must return the writ to the Clerk of the Crown as soon as possible. The writ must be endorsed with the name of the successful candidate. 2 You should ensure that, to the best of your knowledge, the member's full name, any title and their address are given in the full endorsement of the writ. You, or the person you have delegated this to, must sign the writ and state the capacity in which you are acting. A photocopy of the endorsed writ should be made in case it is lost in transmission to the Clerk of the Crown. The endorsed and signed writ should then be returned to the Clerk of the Crown via the relevant Royal Mail Regional Operations Director through whom the writ was delivered (or by other agreed

arrangements). For more information about the issue, delivery and receipt of the writ see our guidance on the issue and receipt of the writ . 1. Schedule 1, rule 53, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.1, rule 51, RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Providing notice of the result After the election Deposits

Deposits Returning deposits You must return the £500 deposit made by or on behalf of a candidate if the candidate is found to have polled more than 5% of the total number of valid votes cast in the constituency. You must return the deposit to the person who made it by no later than the next working day after the result of the election is declared. If you are returning a deposit by cheque, it is treated as being returned on the day on which the cheque is posted. Forfeited deposits You must not return the deposit if the candidate is found to have polled equal to or less than 5% of the total number of valid votes cast. 1 In this case their deposit will be forfeited. You must send any forfeited deposits to His Majesty. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities will provide further information on this process. 2 1. Schedule 1, Rule 53, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.1, Rule 53(1), RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Deposits Providing notice of the result

Retention and disposal of election documents Retention and disposal of election documents You should maintain a document retention policy. You should ensure that you do not retain documents for longer than the period specified in your document retention policy and that they are securely destroyed at the appropriate point. Your document retention policy should set out the following for all documents you receive and hold: whether the document contains personal data the lawful basis on which any personal data was collected (see 'Lawful basis for processing' in our data protection guidance) your retention period your rationale for the retention period You can find more information in our data protection guidance for Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers . In some cases this will be straightforward since electoral legislation will require a set period for which documents are retained, you can find a list of these documents here . In other cases, you will need to make a local decision and justify this in your document retention policy. Our data protection guidance contains further information on the storage of personal data and on document retention.

Election documents in England and Wales Election documents in England and Wales You must forward the required election documents to the relevant registration officer, who is legally responsible for keeping them. The relevant registration officer is the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) of the local authority in whose area the constituency is situated. If the constituency crosses local authority boundaries, the relevant registration officer is the ERO of the local authority with the highest number of registered electors in the constituency. 1 If you are not also the relevant registration officer, you must securely forward the documents to them. The one year period that the documents must be stored for starts from the date the ERO receives them. 2 You should liaise with them at an early stage to put in place arrangements for the forwarding of the prescribed documents after the declaration of results. You should ensure that all of the documentation is kept secure and accounted for during the process of being forwarded to the ERO.

Election documents in Scotland The Returning Officer must retain the election documents for the constituency, or constituencies, they are responsible for.

Election notices published on your website Election notices published on your website You will need to consider whether it is appropriate or necessary for the various election notices published on your website to remain there

beyond the expiry of the petition period for the election. Where each notice serves a specific purpose, i.e. advising who will be a candidate at the election, once the election is over, and the opportunity to question that election has passed, they serve no further purpose. You should either remove such notices published on your website, or remove the personal data contained in these notices, once the petition deadline for that election has passed. Data protection legislation does permit personal data to be stored for longer periods if the data will be processed solely for archiving purposes in the public interest, or for scientific, historical, or statistical purposes and subject to the implementation of appropriate safeguards. For election results, for example, you should retain these on your website as they are for public interest and historical and statistical purposes. Home address forms must be kept securely stored for a period of 21 calendar days after you have returned the writ. They must be securely destroyed on the next working day after the 21 day period. If an election petition relating to the election is presented within the 21 calendar days, the home address forms must be kept securely until the conclusion of the petition proceedings (including any appeal from such proceedings). They must then be securely destroyed on the next working day following the conclusion of the proceedings or appeal.

3 Return of equipment

You should make arrangements to return any equipment, such as the empty ballot boxes, to storage. During this process you should conduct an audit of your equipment, identifying any damaged items for repair or disposal. This will enable you to plan for any replacements you may need to purchase for future polls.

1. Schedule 1, Rule 55(1A) and s8, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1

2. S.1, Rule 57(1), RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2

3. S.1, Rule 53A, RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3

Last updated: 12 July 2023

Book traversal links for Retention and disposal of election documents

Deposits

Responsibility for sealing and retaining election documents

You have a legal duty to seal up the election documents listed below and, on the completion of the counting of ballot papers, must forward these to the relevant registration officer in England and Wales, or retain them in Scotland.

1 If you are not also the ERO, the ERO will need to ensure that they have a mechanism in place to record the date of receipt, so they know when to destroy the documents that have been forwarded. The following lists contain the documents you must forward to the ERO in England and Wales, or retain as RO in Scotland.

Documents from polling stations:

2 The packets containing:

- list of tendered votes
- list of voters with disabilities assisted by companions
- declarations made by companions of voters with disabilities
- list of votes marked by the Presiding Officer
- statements relating to votes marked by the Presiding Officer
- list of persons to whom ballot papers are delivered after the correction of a clerical error or as a result of a decision on an appeal to the county court

BPRL VIDEF and VIDEF notes sheet ■ marked copies of the register of electors, the marked list of proxies and any marked copy notices issued as a result of the correction of a clerical error or a decision on an appeal to the relevant court

the packets containing the completed polling station corresponding number lists

certificates of employment on duty on polling day

Documents from the postal vote issues and openings:

3 marked copies of the postal voters' list and postal proxy voters' list

the packets containing the completed postal vote corresponding number lists

the packets of postal voting statements accepted as valid

the packets of rejected postal votes

the packets of rejected postal ballot paper envelopes

the lists of cancelled, lost and spoilt postal ballot papers

the packet of spoilt postal ballot papers and accompanying documents

the packet of lost postal ballot papers containing any part of the postal

ballot pack that was not lost and which was returned to you before you issued a replacement the packet of postal ballot papers, statements and envelopes that have been cancelled unopened postal ballot packs received after the close of poll or returned as undelivered (these can be forwarded at a subsequent date) All ROs must forward the statement as to postal ballot papers, the relevant parts of the list of postal votes that have failed the identifier checks to the relevant ERO. The ERO will use this information to enable them to send postal vote identifier rejection notices to those electors. You can find further information on this process within our ERO guidance for England , Scotland and Wales . You should also forward at the same time your record of any instances where you suspect an offence may have been committed, so that the EROs know in which cases they should not send out a postal vote identifier rejection notice.

4 For further information on the contents of the various lists relating to postal voting, see our guidance on Keeping records of the receipt and opening of postal votes Documents from the count: 5 all ballot papers separately stored as: counted ballot papers rejected ballot papers unused ballot papers (both ordinary and tendered) and spoilt ballot papers (placed together) used tendered ballot papers ballot paper accounts, the result of the verification of the ballot paper accounts and the statement of rejected ballot papers

1. Schedule 1, Rule 57, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.1, Rule 55(1), RPA 1983, ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Regulation 91, Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR (E&W) 2001); Regulation 91 and 91A, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (E&W) 2001) ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Reg 91 and 91A, RPR (E&W) 2001; Reg 91 and 91A, RPR (S) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. S.1, Rule 55, RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 5

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Responsibility for sealing and retaining election documents Retention and disposal of election documents Preparing election documents for storage Preparing election documents for storage A full list of the documents you have a duty to forward to the relevant ERO in England and Wales, or in Scotland retain as RO, can be found here in our guidance on Forwarding or retaining election documents. You should make sure that the packaging process is as transparent as possible. You should maintain a clear audit trail when packaging and (if required) forwarding the documents as this will help facilitate the retrieval of documents should anyone wish to inspect the public documents. The packaging and labelling system you use should both provide secure storage and support timely retrieval. A clear audit trail and transparent process can be achieved by: producing clear labels for each packet you must seal all of the relevant documentation in separate packets 1 and mark each packet with a description of its contents, the date of the election and the election to which it relates 2 the label must also include the name of the constituency and should state how long the packet is to be kept and when it is to be destroyed (unless otherwise directed by order of the House of Commons, the High Court (Court of Session in Scotland), the Crown Court or a magistrates' court) the labels for documents open to public inspection and for documents that are not open to public inspection should be different. As a minimum, the packets containing documents not open to public inspection should clearly state this fact 3 ensuring that you have factored the parcelling up of documents into your verification and count planning. You can find more information in our guidance on planning for the verification. covering packing instructions as part of your training for polling station staff and when training postal voting and count supervisors. Providing written instructions should also help to reduce the risk of documents being packaged wrongly. A template graphical guide to

packaging materials at the close of poll is available, which you could adapt and provide to polling station staff. Staff should also refer to our polling station handbook. creating a list of all documents to be forwarded (where this is required). You should keep a record of all of the materials that you have a duty to send to the relevant registration officer, and ensure that all of the items are accounted for and delivered securely in accordance with data protection requirements. Close of poll packing instructions (DOC) Polling station handbook – UK Parliamentary election (PDF)

- We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. If you are running a UK Parliamentary by-election you should contact your local Commission team for support and advice. In England and Wales where you have forwarded documents to the relevant ERO, you should also: record the number of parcels you have despatched record the details of the ERO to whom they have been sent obtain a receipt from the ERO confirming that the parcels have been safely received It is important to ensure that all packets and receptacles containing election documents will be stored securely before being transferred to the ERO so that no unauthorised persons can tamper with them. 1. Schedule 1, Rule 54, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.1, Rule 55(1), RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. S.1 Rules 43 and 54, RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Preparing election documents for storage Responsibility for sealing and retaining election documents Post election data collection Post election data collection Data collection and feedback at a general election At a general election, we will request that you send information and data to us relating to the election. Forms for collecting information and data, and accompanying guidance notes for completion, as well as a Commission feedback form, will be circulated separately and will also be available on our website. Statement as to postal ballot papers You must complete a statement as to postal ballot papers for the constituency. 1 This document is vital for the accounting of postal votes and for ensuring that voters have confidence that their vote will be counted in the way they intended. The statement should form part of the arrangements that you have in place to maintain a clear audit trail of the postal voting and count processes. You should complete the statement accurately using the figures recorded at the issue, receipt, opening and verification of postal votes. You can find further information on record-keeping during the postal voting process in our guidance on Keeping records of the receipt and opening of postal votes . We will provide a template statement as to postal ballot papers, which should be used. The accompanying guidance notes should support you in completing these. Postal voting ballot paper account (DOC) Where to send the statement as to ballot papers You must provide a copy of the completed statement at the same time and to the same person as you forward the other election documents listed in our guidance: Forwarding or retaining election documents You must also provide a copy of the statement to us at the Commission and to the Secretary of State. The statement must not be provided before the tenth calendar day after polling day but must arrive no later than the twenty-fifth calendar day after the polling day. 2 If either of these dates is not a working day, the time is extended to the next working day. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities are administering returns on behalf of the Secretary of State, and statements should be sent to elections@cabinetoffice.gov.uk using a subject title of '[authority name] – Form K return for the Secretary of State'. Details for how to provide this information to us will be provided in a Commission EA Bulletin . Voter Identification evaluation form (VIDEF) In England and Wales, the Electoral Registration Officer is

responsible for forwarding the collated data from the VIDEF to the Secretary of State and to the Electoral Commission, if requested. 3 More information is available in the guidance for EROs in England and Wales . In Scotland, the Returning Officer is responsible for forward the collated data from the VIDEF to the Secretary of State and to the Electoral Commission, if requested. For more information see our guidance on the Public inspection of election documentation in Scotland . 1. Regulation 91, Representation of the People (England and Wales) Regulations 2001 (RPR (E&W) 2001); Regulation 91A, Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR (S) 2001) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Reg 91, RPR (E&W) 2001; Reg 91, RPR (S) 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Rule 40B (6) and (7) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Post election data collection Preparing election documents for storage Access, supply and inspection of documents after an election Access, supply and inspection of documents after an election In England and Wales responsibility for administering the inspection and supply of elections documentation, including the marked registers, rests with the Electoral Registration Officer, not the RO. In Scotland the responsibility for administering the inspection and supply of marked registers and marked absent voter lists rests with the Returning Officer, not the ERO. Guidance specific to Scotland only can be found in the pages that follow. The following pages identify: the types of elections documents available for inspection or supply the types of elections documents not open for inspection We have produced an access and supply checklist, which should be used alongside this guidance. Access and Supply Checklist - All Election Types You should ensure that you have processes in place to retrieve data and securely destroy it at the appropriate time in accordance with electoral law and with your document retention policy, which should include the data protection principles. Disclosure of personal information If you receive a request to inspect any documents that contain personal data, for example the postal voting statement, you must also take into consideration whether inspection of the completed statement by that individual, falls within the remit of their basis for lawful processing. As a data protection safeguarding measure, it may also be proportionate to redact some personal data, for example the date of birth or signature, before providing the inspection of such documents. Further detailed guidance on data protection legislation is contained in our data protection guidance . For details on the retention and inspection of candidates' election spending, see our guidance on What you need to do with spending returns . Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Access, supply and inspection of documents after an election Post election data collection Election documents available for inspection or supply Election documents available for inspection or supply In England and Wales the responsibility for administering inspection and supply of marked registers and marked absent voter lists rests with the Electoral Registration Officer, not the RO. Further guidance on this can be found in: our ERO guidance for England our ERO guidance for Wales In Scotland the RO retains responsibility for: public inspection of election documentation supply of copies of the marked register of electors and absent voters' lists election documentation available to police and security organisations The following pages identify: the types of election documents available for inspection or supply who can have access to these documents how requests for accessing these documents must be made any applicable fees (where relevant) You should ensure you have processes in place to retrieve data and securely destroy it at the appropriate time in accordance with electoral law and with your document retention policy which should include the data protection principles. If you receive a request to inspect

any documents that contain personal data, for example the postal voting statement, you must also take into consideration whether inspection of the completed statement by that individual, falls within the remit of their basis for lawful processing. As a data protection safeguarding measure, it may also be proportionate to redact some personal data, for example the date of birth or signature, before providing the inspection of such documents. Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Election documents available for inspection or supply

Access, supply and inspection of documents after an election

Public inspection of election documentation in Scotland

Public inspection of election documentation in Scotland

Any person may inspect the marked register and any notices amending it, plus the marked copies of the list of postal voters, the list of proxies, and the list of postal proxy voters and such other documents relating to an election as you are required to retain, except ballot papers, completed corresponding number lists, certificates as to employment on the day of the election, and the list of ballot papers rejected under the verification procedure.

1 Any person wanting to inspect the marked register or absent voters list must apply in writing and must state:

2 which register or document they wish to inspect whether they wish to inspect a printed or data copy (where appropriate) the purposes for which any information will be used where the request concerns the marked register or lists, why inspection of the full register or unmarked lists would not be sufficient to achieve the purpose who will be inspecting the documents, and the date on which they wish to make the inspection

You may refuse to allow inspection of these documents if you are satisfied that the purposes of the requestor can be met by inspection of the full register, in which case you must inform the requestor of this decision and provide information concerning the availability of the full register for inspection.

3 Otherwise, the documents must be made available within 10 days of receipt of the application. You must arrange for them to be inspected under supervision.

4 Inspection can take place anywhere you choose. Those inspecting the documents can make copies of the registers and lists using handwritten notes only.

5 Laptop computers and other recording equipment may not be used except by police and security organisations listed in our guidance on Election documentation available to police and security organisations in Scotland .

Copies of the other election documentation open to inspection may not be made in any form. The same safeguards apply regarding the supervision and protection of the information as apply with the inspection of the full register .

any article 89 GDPR purposes electoral purposes

Ballot paper refusal lists (BPRLs)

In Scotland, the Returning Officer is responsible for dealing with requests for disclosure of information from BPRLs. You may only disclose information from the BPRL to the elector, whose ballot paper was refused, or in the case of a proxy being refused a ballot paper, the person acting as proxy or the elector on whose behalf they were acting as a proxy.

6 **Voter identification evaluation form (VIDEF)**

In Scotland, the Returning Officer is responsible for the VIDEFs and VIDEF notes sheets. After taking receipt of the polling station VIDEFs, you must, as soon as practicable, anonymise the data contained on them (for example, by destroying any related VIDEF notes sheets, or by removing any elector details recorded on the VIDEF for the purpose of capturing any of the required data).

7 You must also collate the data from the VIDEFs into two separate groups: one group providing total figures for all polling stations where voters were given an explanation of the photographic ID requirement before they applied for a ballot paper (e.g. where staff were appointed to greet voters and explain the requirements as they entered the polling station) one group providing total figures for all polling stations where voters were not given an explanation of

the photographic ID requirement You must submit the data to the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission (if requested to do so). 8 The anonymised, collated data from the polling station VIDEFs is not open for inspection, and you must not disclose this information to anyone apart from the statutory duty to share information with the Secretary of State and the Electoral Commission (if requested to do so). 9 The polling station VIDEFs must be retained for 10 years, in an anonymised format. 10 To achieve this, you must ensure that any related VIDEF notes sheets are destroyed, or that you have removed any elector details recorded on the VIDEF for the purpose of capturing any of the required data. Data will be collected using the VIDEF and VIDEF notes sheets for the first two parliamentary general elections. 11 Following a scheduled election we will update you on the process for providing the required anonymised and collated information to the Electoral Commission through our Bulletin.

■ 1. Regulation 118(1), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR 2001), ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Reg 118(2), RPR 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Reg 118(4), RPR 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Reg 118(3), RPR 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 4 5. Reg 118(7), RPR 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 5 6. Regulation 32 The Voter Identification Regulations 2022 (VID Regs 2022) ■ Back to content at footnote 6 7. Reg 35(2) VID Regs 2022 ■ Back to content at footnote 7 8. Rule 40B(5) and (6) Schedule 1 Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 8 9. Rule 40B(7) Sch 1 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 9 10. Rule 40B(8) Sch 1 RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 10 11. S.59A RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 11

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Public inspection of election documentation in Scotland

Election documents available for inspection or supply

Supply of copies of the marked register of electors and absent voters' lists in Scotland

Supply of copies of the marked register of electors and absent voters' lists in Scotland

If requested, the relevant parts of the marked copy of the register of electors and any notices amending it, plus the marked copies of the list of postal voters, the list of proxies, and the list of postal proxy voters, must be supplied to specified persons on payment of a prescribed fee.

1 The request must be made in writing and must specify:

2 which of the marked register or lists (or relevant parts of them) are requested; whether printed or data copies are requested; and the purpose for which the data will be used and why the supply of the full data would not be sufficient to achieve that purpose

The marked register of electors and lists may only be used for:

article 89 GDPR purposes

electoral purposes

purposes that are applicable under the regulation entitling the individual or body to the use of the full register of electors

The cost of a marked document is prescribed. The charge for data copies is £10 plus £1 per 1,000 entries or part thereof, and for printed copies it is £10 plus £2 per 1,000 entries or part thereof.

3 You must supply the requested copies provided the relevant fee is paid and you are satisfied that the requestor needs to see the marks on the marked register or lists in order to achieve the purpose for which it is requested.

4 If you are not satisfied that the requestor needs to see the marks on the marked register or list(s) for the purpose for which it is requested, you may treat the request as one for information in unmarked lists or for a copy of the full register, or both. When you supply the marked register, you should remind the recipient that the data should be securely destroyed once the purpose for which it has been supplied has finished.

1. Regulation 117(1), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 (RPR 2001) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. Reg 117(3), RPR 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Reg 120(2), RPR 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. Reg 117(4), RPR 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 4

Last updated: 31 May 2023

Book traversal links for Supply of copies of the marked register of electors and absent voters' lists in Scotland Public inspection of election documentation in Scotland Election documentation available to police and security organisations in Scotland Election documentation available to police and security organisations in Scotland The Security Service, Government Communications Headquarters, and Secret Intelligence Service are entitled to a free copy of any election document open to inspection, and any other document related to the election on request. The police (including the National Crime Agency) are also entitled to free copies on request of any of these if they have inspected them. 1 This is except for: ballot papers completed corresponding number lists certificates of employment on duty on polling day A request for access to these documents must be accompanied by reference to the relevant regulation which gives them the right of supply. Supply of a copy of the documents and access for inspection is free of charge. Information supplied may only be used for the purposes set out in the regulation under which the body can obtain the full register. 1. Regulation 118(8), Representation of the People (Scotland) Regulations 2001 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Election documentation available to police and security organisations in Scotland Supply of copies of the marked register of electors and absent voters' lists in Scotland Documents not available for inspection Documents not available for inspection The following documentation is not available for public inspection, except by court order: ballot papers completed corresponding number lists certificates of employment on duty on polling day These documents can only be accessed if the High Court or a county court in England and Wales, or the Court of Session or a sheriff in Scotland, is satisfied by evidence on oath that access is required for one of the following reasons: for instituting or maintaining a prosecution for an offence in relation to ballot papers for the purpose of an election petition Access can also be ordered by the House of Commons or by an election court. Applications do not have to be made in open court: they can be made by a judge from the relevant court either in open court or otherwise. Nomination papers Nomination papers can only be inspected by certain people until the deadline for objections has passed, as described in our guidance on Attendance at the delivery of nomination papers . Nomination papers cannot be inspected by anybody else at any time. Nomination papers may only be viewed and supplied to those who have a legal power to obtain documents. This may be a police officer using any powers they may have to take documents into their custody, or a court order. With the exception of the home address form, you should store the nomination papers securely for one year after the election due to the time limit for prosecution in case of an election petition. If such legal proceedings are or are liable to take place, you should retain the nomination papers until the court has completed its process. Home address forms You must keep home address forms securely stored for a period of 21 calendar days after you have returned the writ and securely destroyed on the next working day after the 21-day period. If an election petition relating to the election is presented within the 21 calendar days, the home address forms must be kept securely until the conclusion of the petition proceedings (including any appeal from such proceedings). You must then securely destroy them on the next working day following the conclusion of the proceedings or appeal. Ballot paper refusal lists (BPRLs) In England and Wales, the Electoral Registration Officer is responsible for dealing with requests for disclosure of information from the BPRLs. More information can be found in our guidance for EROs in England and Wales . In Scotland, the Returning Officer is responsible for dealing with requests for disclosure of information from the BPRLs.

You may only disclose information from the BPRL to the elector, whose ballot paper was refused, or in the case of a proxy being refused a ballot paper, the person acting as proxy or the elector on whose behalf they were acting as a proxy. 1 Voter identification evaluation form (VIDEF) In England and Wales, the Electoral Registration Officer is responsible for of VIDEFs and the VIDEF notes sheets. Information regarding the VIDEF and the VIDEF notes sheet can be read in the guidance for EROs in England and Wales . In Scotland, the Returning Officer is responsible for the VIDEFs and VIDEF notes sheets.■ For more information see our guidance on the Public inspection of election documentation in Scotland . 1. Regulation 32 The Voter Identification Regulations 2022 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Documents not available for inspection Election documentation available to police and security organisations in Scotland FOI requests FOI requests Following the election you may receive requests under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000. ROs and EROs are not a public authority under this Act and, as such, are exempt from the disclosure requirements imposed by it. 1 However, where possible, ROs and EROs should disclose the requested information, provided this information is already in the public domain, or the information requested does not include personal data. An example of non-personal data would be statistical data providing the total number of electors registered in your area or the turnout of postal voters. 1. Section 3, Freedom of Information Act 2000 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for FOI requests Documents not available for inspection Accounting for the election Accounting for the election UK Parliamentary elections are funded by the UK Government and claims for fees and charges for the election are administered through the Elections Claims Unit, which is part of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). Detailed guidance and instructions for accounting for the election will be provided by DLUHC. Contact details for the Elections Claims Unit are as follows: Electoral Claims Unit, DLUHC Second Floor, Rosebery Court St Andrews Business Park Central Avenue Norwich NR7 0HS Please contact returningofficers.expenses@levellingup.gov.uk for more information. Payment of creditors You should keep receipts, purchase orders and invoices received before and throughout the election period for all services/work provided, and pay all creditors as soon as possible after the election. Payment of fees to staff Income tax Under tax rules a standard starter checklist, which is issued at the time of appointment, must be completed by all staff working directly for the (Acting) Returning Officer. It needs to be completed only once rather than reviewed every year. You will need to issue a P60 form to the employee at the end of the tax year. If you terminate the employment of any of your casual staff following the election and issue them with a P45, then any returning casual staff who work at future elections will need to complete a new standard starter checklist at each new election. HMRC real-time information All election payments made will be subject to HMRC's real-time information tax payment system. You should ensure that you liaise with your local authority's finance and HR departments to ensure that you can comply with the tax rules for all your employees, including any temporary and short-term contract staff. Further guidance is available from HMRC . Automatic enrolment into a workplace pension All employers with staff working in the UK must comply with automatic enrolment requirements. Further guidance is available from the Pensions Regulator . Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Accounting for the election FOI requests Candidates' election spending Candidates' election spending The Electoral Commission is, by law, required to monitor compliance with candidate election spending and donations. Legislation imposes limits on candidates' spending

and sets specific deadlines for the submission of spending information. All election agents must submit a candidate's spending return to you, together with relevant invoices and receipts, within 35 calendar days of the day of the declaration of result of the election (unless the last day of the period falls on a weekend or bank holiday, in which case the last day moves to the next working day). 1 This means that if you declared a result on Friday 6 May, for example, the deadline for the submission of the spending return would be Friday 10 June. A spending return must be submitted even when an election is uncontested. 2 The legislation also requires election agents and candidates to submit separate declarations confirming the candidate's election spending return is complete and correct. The election agent's declaration must be submitted alongside the full spending return. The candidate's declaration must be submitted within seven working days of the election agent submitting the full spending return. However, if the candidate is out of the UK when the return is submitted to you, they must make the declaration within 14 calendar days of coming back to the UK (unless the last day of the period falls on a weekend or bank holiday, in which case the last day moves to the next working day). In order to maintain a clear audit trail, you should ensure that any documentation relating to a candidate's spending return, including the election agent's declaration, is date-stamped on receipt. 1. Section 81, Representation of the People Acts 1983 (RPA 1983)

■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.82, RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2
Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Candidates' election spending Accounting for the election What you need to do with spending returns What you need to do with spending returns You must send copies of election spending returns and declarations to the Electoral Commission as soon as reasonably practicable after the return or declaration is received. 1 Please also provide copies of the relevant invoices and receipts. Could you please also provide, to enable us to carry out our compliance duties: electorate figures for each constituency (used to calculate the candidates' spending limit) the spending limit provided to candidates, if applicable confirmation of any candidates who did not submit a return statement of persons nominated, notice of agents, and declaration of result for each election Our preferred method of receipt is secure document transfer, which will make the process of delivering these returns easier for you. The Commission can provide access to a secure document transfer system on request. Please contact us at candidates@electoralcommission.org.uk to arrange this. If for any reason you prefer to email the returns, please email scanned PDF copies to candidates@electoralcommission.org.uk . It will be of significant help to us in processing emailed returns, and prevent queries from us to you, if you: scan each candidate's spending return, with the relevant invoices and receipts, separately send each return by separate email, as very large attachments will be rejected by our server identify the constituency and the candidate name in the subject line of the email do not password protect emails or provide passwords or secure websites – a normal email is fine If neither of the above options are viable, you can forward paper copies of the returns to the following address: Party and Election Finance The Electoral Commission 3 Bunhill Row London EC1Y 8YZ 1. Section 87A(1), Representation of the Peoples Act 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for What you need to do with spending returns Candidates' election spending Retention, inspection and supply of spending returns Retention, inspection and supply of spending returns You must retain a copy of each candidate's election spending return and declaration, along with any accompanying documents, for a period of two years beginning with the date when the return is received. During

that period, you must make copies available for public inspection without charge. You should make copies of the spending returns, declarations, and other accompanying documents available to anybody who requests them for a fee of £0.20 per side of paper. You must supply copies of the spending returns or declaration upon receipt of payment. The addresses of individuals who have made donations to candidates must be redacted from all inspection copies and copies supplied on request. At the end of the two-year period, if the candidate or the relevant election agent requests them, they must be returned to the candidate. Otherwise the returns, declaration and accompanying documents may be destroyed. 1 No later than 10 calendar days after the deadline for spending returns to be submitted, you must publish, in at least two newspapers circulating in the constituency, a notice of the time and place at which the spending returns and declarations (including the accompanying documents) can be inspected. This notice must also be sent to each election agent. 2 If there are outstanding returns or declarations by the time the notice is dispatched for publication, you must state this in the notice. If the returns/declarations are received subsequently, you must also publish a revised notice in the two newspapers. We have produced guidance for candidates and agents on election spending and the required returns; in addition, candidates and agents can also download the return of candidate election spending form with integrated explanatory notes, the declaration by the election agent as to election spending and the declaration by the candidate as to their election spending. You can download all these documents from our website: for a UK Parliamentary General election , or for a UK Parliamentary by-election . 1. S.89, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.88, RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Retention, inspection and supply of spending returns What you need to do with spending returns Expenses returns from non-party campaigners Expenses returns from non-party campaigners You have the power to request a spending return from local non-party campaigners who campaign for or against individual candidates at a UK Parliamentary general election and who are not otherwise required to submit a return. It is important to note that this is a power and not a duty. If you require further information about this power, you should contact your local Commission team . You can request a spending return during the period of six months beginning with polling day, and the request must be complied with within 21 calendar days beginning with the day on which the request is received. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Expenses returns from non-party campaigners Retention, inspection and supply of spending returns Challenges to the election result Challenges to the election result Election results may be challenged either by way of an election petition or by a judicial determination of disqualification of a duly elected candidate. Your role as (Acting) Returning Officer for both of these processes is limited. You should keep a robust audit trail of your decisions throughout the election period to be able to provide any necessary evidence as a result of an election petition. Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Challenges to the election result Expenses returns from non-party campaigners Election petitions Election petitions An election petition can be used to challenge the result of elections. A petition for a UK Parliamentary election can be presented by: 1 a person who claims that they were a candidate at the election, or a person claiming to have had a right to be elected or returned at the election, or a person who either voted at, or who had the right to vote at, the election An election petition may not be presented by an elector who has registered anonymously. What is the basis for an election petition? The allowable grounds for a UK Parliamentary election petition are

that there has been an: undue election, or undue return 2 Who is made a respondent? The duly elected candidate whose election is questioned by the petition will be the respondent to the petition. If the petition relates to the conduct of the election, you may also be a respondent to the petition as (Acting) Returning Officer. Deadlines and locations for bringing petitions In England and Wales, the appropriate court for dealing with petitions is the High Court. In Scotland, it is the Court of Session. A petition at a UK Parliamentary election must normally be presented within 21 calendar days after the date of the return of the writ to the Clerk of the Crown (which in most cases will be the day after the election). 3 Any person who is considering presenting an election petition should be advised to take their own legal advice. For any questions in England and Wales relating to election petitions and the process for submitting petitions, including to confirm the deadlines, you should contact the Elections Petitions Office: The Election Petitions Office Room E113 Royal Courts of Justice Strand London WC2A 2LL Email: Election_Petitions@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk Phone: 020 7947 6877 Fax: 0870 324 0024 In Scotland, you should contact The Petitions Department: The Petitions Department Court of Session Parliament Square Edinburgh EH1 1RQ Email: supreme.courts@scotcourts.gov.uk Tel: 0131 240 6747 Fax: 0131 240 6711 1. S.121, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983) ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.120, RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. s.122, RPA 1983 ■ Back to content at footnote 3 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Election petitions Challenges to the election result Challenging the result on the grounds of disqualification Challenging the result on the grounds of disqualification There is a separate judicial process for challenging the election of an MP on the grounds that they were or are disqualified under the House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 (as amended). In that case, an application may be made to the Privy Council for a declaration to that effect (provided that a petition is not pending or has been tried in which the alleged disqualification is or was in issue (and where the grounds for the disqualification applied at the time of the election) or an Order of the House of Commons to disregard the disqualification has not been made). 1 Any person may apply to the High Court for a declaration that a Member of Parliament is, or at any time since being elected has been, disqualified from being a Member of Parliament. 2 Any person considering applying for a judicial declaration of disqualification should seek their own legal advice. 1. S.7, House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. S.7, House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975 ■ Back to content at footnote 2 Last updated: 31 May 2023 Book traversal links for Challenging the result on the grounds of disqualification Election petitions Reviewing the election Reviewing the election After the poll you should carry out a thorough evaluation of all processes outlined in your project plan seeking feedback from appropriate stakeholders, and produce a lessons learnt document which will be used to inform the project plan and risk register for future electoral events. The scope of the review should cover all aspects of the election and each process that was planned for and carried out should be reviewed. A key part of the review will be the consideration of the aims and objectives set out in your project plan and measuring your performance against these. You should pay particular attention to reviewing: your project planning whether you were able to secure adequate resources if your constituency crosses local authority boundaries, what worked well and what could be improved when working with elections staff from the other local authority/authorities how contractors have been managed and whether they delivered work to the required specification the equipment and stationery used the recruitment and training of staff the suitability of venues used the management of nominations,

polling stations, the absent voting process, and the verification and count the processing and handling of queries your public engagement activity any issues affecting the security/integrity of the election your interactions with candidates and agents As part of the review you should seek feedback from appropriate stakeholders including: your staff and, if your constituency crosses local authority boundaries, elections staff from the other local authority/authorities electors candidates, agents and political parties local organisations of disabled people, older people and minority ethnic groups, and the council's access officers You should consider inviting a number of members of staff, including polling station staff, to a discussion in order to address all aspects of the polling station process, from training and briefing sessions through to dealing with difficult situations on polling day. You should also take into account any feedback provided in reports returned by Presiding Officers and polling station inspectors. Once you have reviewed all aspects of the election and sought feedback from appropriate stakeholders you should produce a lessons learnt document. The lessons learnt document should include an analysis of what practices were successful and where these could be used elsewhere, what you would do again or do differently, and key recommendations. The lessons learnt report should then be used to inform the project plan and risk register for future electoral events. Last updated: 31 May 2023

[Book traversal links for Reviewing the election](#)
[Challenging the result on the grounds of disqualification](#)
[Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - After the election](#)
[Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - After the election](#)
[Access and Supply Checklist - All Election Types](#)
[Close of poll packing instructions \(DOC\)](#)
[Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary election](#) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed.
[Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary elections 2023 \(PDF\)](#)
[Postal voting ballot paper account \(DOC\)](#) Last updated: 28 June 2023

[Book traversal links for Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers - After the election](#)
[Reviewing the election](#)
[Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers](#)
[Resources for \(Acting\) Returning Officers](#)
[Planning for the election](#)
[Absent voters' list request form \(DOC\)](#)
[Ballot paper account exercise \(DOC\)](#)
[Briefing for candidates and agents - UK Parliamentary election \(PPTX\)](#)
[Checklist for polling station inspectors \(DOCX\)](#)
[Close of poll packing instructions \(DOCX\)](#)
[Code of conduct for campaigners - reserved elections in GB from January 2023](#)
[FAQs for frontline staff](#) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed.
[Forensic Science Service guidance UKPGE Election timetable generic \(DOCX\)](#)
[UKPE By election timetable generic \(DOCX\)](#)
[2017 Guidance on preventing and detecting electoral fraud in Scotland](#)
[Making your mark - design guidance for EAs](#)
[Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election \(DOC\)](#)
[Observers at UK elections booklet](#) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed.
[Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary election](#) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed.
[Polling station quick guide - UK Parliamentary election](#) - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed.
[Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary elections 2023 \(PDF\)](#)
[Polling station handbook quick guide - UK Parliamentary elections 2023 \(PDF\)](#)
[Polling station staff briefing - UK Parliamentary election \(PPTX\)](#)
[Polling station scenarios for polling station staff - UKPGE \(DOCX\)](#)

Polling station quiz - UKPGE (DOCX) Project plan UKPGE EA (docx) Register request form (DOC) Risk register Secrecy requirements - the poll (DOC) Tips on managing the media at the count (DOC) Starting the election timetable UKPGE Election timetable generic (DOCX) UKPE By election timetable generic (DOCX) Notice of election - UK Parliamentary elections (DOCX) Nominations Emblem_UK-V2 Nomination checklist for UK Parliamentary elections (DOC) Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election (DOC) Notice of poll - UKPE (DOCX) Quality Assurance Guidance for ROs (PDF) Withdrawal form - must be printed off (DOC) Agents Counting agent appointment form (DOC) Nomination pack - UK Parliamentary general election (DOC) Polling agent appointment form (DOC) Postal voting agent appointment form (DOC) Secrecy requirements - postal voting (DOC) Secrecy requirements - the count Secrecy requirements - the poll (DOC) Absent voting Forensic Science Service guidance on signature checking (PDF) UKPGE Election timetable generic (DOCX) UKPE By election timetable generic (DOCX) Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary election - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Postal voting ballot paper account generic (DOCX) Postal vote opening flowchart (DOC) Postal vote matching spreadsheet (XLS) Secrecy requirements - postal voting (DOC) Polling station voting Checklist for polling station inspectors (DOCX) Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary election - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Secrecy requirements - the poll (DOC) Verification and count Checklist when dealing with ballot box variances (DOC) Doubtful ballot paper placemat (UK Parliamentary elections) Doubtful ballot paper booklet (UK Parliamentary elections) Example checklist of materials required at the verification and count (DOC) Observer access restrictions log (DOC) Observers at UK elections booklet - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Secrecy requirements - count - S66 Tips on managing the media at the count (DOC) After the election Access and Supply Checklist - All Election Types Close of poll packing instructions (DOCX) Polling station handbook - UK Parliamentary election - We are updating this resource to reflect new measures introduced by the Elections Act 2022. It will be available again once the updates have been completed. Postal voting ballot paper account (DOC) Last updated: 28 September 2023 Book traversal links for Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers Resources for (Acting) Returning Officers - After the election