Feasibility studies: scope and approach | Electoral Commission Search Feasibility studies: scope and approach You are in the Modernising electoral registration: feasibility studies section Home A modern electoral register Modernising electoral registration: feasibility studies First published: 19 July 2019 Last updated: 8 June 2021 Feasibility studies: scope and approach We conducted feasibility studies to explore the technical, operational and resource requirements necessary to deliver a number of electoral registration reforms, including: better use of public data by Electoral Registration Officers (EROs); direct or automatic enrolment processes; integrating electoral registration into other public service transactions; and the better identification and management of duplicate registration applications. Summary We began the feasibility studies by identifying reliable information already collected by government departments and agencies, which could potentially be used to support each of the electoral registration reforms. We also conducted research on existing public sector data infrastructures to explore the extent to which they could be used or developed further to support reform. We discussed the proposed reforms with key stakeholders to better understand their requirements and gain insight into the challenges they face in managing electoral registration, particularly in relation to making use of data. We developed and tested a number of implementation scenarios for each of the proposed reforms. We also undertook desk research on other countries' experiences of electoral registration reform to further inform the feasibility studies and our understanding of whether models from overseas could be applied or adapted to the UK. Purpose and scope of the feasibility studies The purpose of the feasibility studies was to identify the technical, operational and resource requirements necessary to deliver the following electoral registration reforms in the UK: Purpose and scope of the feasibility studies Better use of public data EROs can currently access data held locally by local authorities and others to help identify potential electors and manage their electoral registers. We wanted to explore the potential benefits of enabling access to national level public data, to identify people who have changed address and updated their details with other public services, for example when they have applied for a driving licence or passport. Direct or automatic enrolment processes We examined options for increasing the level of automation within the electoral registration system: automated registration, where reliable data would serve as the basis of an individual's electoral registration application, but citizens would still be required to take some steps to complete the process; and automatic registration, where citizens would be added to the electoral register, or their address updated, without them being required to take any active steps. Integrating electoral registration into other public service transactions We examined the extent to which electoral registration applications could be made simultaneously as part of or alongside accessing other public services. Better identification and management of duplicate registration applications We also considered a number of potential ways in which duplicate applications might be better identified and managed within the system. We wanted to understand the extent to which reforms could reduce the administrative impact of processing duplicate applications and help voters check whether they were already registered to vote. How we conducted the feasibility studies Mapping public sector data sources and infrastructures We sought to identify reliable information (principally the core information about voting eligibility) already collected by government departments and agencies (referred to in this report as Data Source Organisations or DSOs), which could potentially be used to support each of the electoral registration reforms. We made contact with the Driver and

Vehicle Licensing Agency, HM Revenue and Customs, HM Passport Office, Department of Work and Pensions, Department for Education and the Education and Skills Funding Agency to discuss the databases they hold and to explore opportunities to share public data with EROs. We also wanted to find out about the public sector data infrastructures that could be utilised or developed further to support reform. We were particularly interested in the extent to which the IER Digital Service, EMS systems and any planned upgrading of infrastructures could help deliver any or all of the reforms. We discussed these points with officials from a number of UK Government departments, including Cabinet Office officials working on the UK Government's Modernising Electoral Registration Programme, and representatives of EMS suppliers. Wider stakeholder consultation It was also important to discuss the proposed reforms with other key stakeholders to better understand their requirements and gain insight into the challenges they face in managing electoral registration, particularly in relation to making use of data. We therefore had discussions with the following organisations and groups: Association of s Elections, Referendums and Registration Working Group Electoral Coordination and Advisory Board Electoral Office for Northern Ireland Scottish Assessors Association Society of Local Authority Chief Executives Wales Electoral Coordination Board Wales Electoral Practitioners' Working Group We particularly wanted to explore with stakeholders their views on how they saw the reforms working in practice and the specific features and capabilities that would be needed. One clear area of interest concerned the structural implications of any reform; in particular, whether a more joined-up system could be integrated into the current, largely decentralised system of electoral registration (at least in Great Britain), or whether a greater degree of centralisation would be required. A further area of discussion focused on the functional requirements of the reforms, i.e. what would key stakeholders expect any new electoral registration process to do? Examples might be for the system to enable EROs to receive up-to-date information from other public bodies about citizens potentially eligible to register; for it to be compatible with existing EMS systems; or for it to be simple to use and therefore require minimal training to operate. Developing implementation scenarios For each of the reforms being considered we developed a number of implementation scenarios as a precursor to testing their feasibility. In order to do this, we applied a feasibility framework called TELOS to each of the implementation scenarios. TELOS is an acronym for the five main areas to be taken into account in a feasibility study: Technical feasibility : what technology would be necessary to implement the electoral registration reform? What additional hardware and software would be required in developing workable solutions? Economic feasibility : what would the estimated cost of implementing and maintaining the reform be? How would the cost compare to the estimated benefits gained from the reform? Legal feasibility : could the reform be delivered under existing legislative provisions or would there need to be changes to legislation? Operational feasibility : what operational changes would need to be put in place to support the reform? How would the reform work across the electoral community? Would additional resources be required? Would the reform be managed centrally or locally? Scheduling feasibility : what would the timeframe be for implementing each of the reforms for governments, DSOs, suppliers and local authorities? What level of coordination would be required? We also undertook a gap analysis in order to identify in broad terms the work necessary to bridge the gap between the current electoral registration system and the scenarios explored by the feasibility studies. Electoral registration framework We also assessed each implementation scenario against our framework for developing priorities for electoral

registration, which states that the registration system should: Maintain or improve current levels of accuracy and completeness Make it as easy as possible for electors to ensure their own registration record is accurate and complete, particularly ahead of elections and referendums Deliver improved public confidence in, understanding of and satisfaction with the system of registering to vote Make better use of resources across the public sector and be more cost-effective Be centred on using trusted data and information Recognise that registration is year-round and not only focused in the autumn or in the immediate lead-up to an electoral event Support innovation and ensure best practices are implemented Enable performance to be demonstrated in a consistent and accurate way, with a focus on outcomes rather than outputs Be sufficiently flexible to recognise the different challenges faced in different parts of the UK International comparisons A range of new and established democracies around the world have already made significant changes to their systems, reflecting rapidly changing demographic and digital communication trends. Several countries have, for example, implemented more datadriven and flexible electoral registration approaches, including more direct or automatic enrolment procedures. We therefore undertook desk research on other countries' experiences of electoral registration reform to further inform the feasibility studies and our understanding of whether models from overseas could be applied or adapted to the UK. Related content Reforming electoral law Find out about electoral law and the changes we want to see A modern electoral register Find out about the changes we want to see to the electoral registration system in the UK Transparent digital campaigning Find out about digital campaigning and the changes we want to see  of elections Find out about the accessibility of elections and the changes we want to see