

Report on the May 2022 elections in Wales | Electoral Commission    Search  
Report on the May 2022 elections in Wales    You are in the Wales local council  
elections section Home    Wales local council elections Currently reading: of 4 - Show  
page contents On this page Voting at the elections Campaigning at the elections  
Delivering the elections Supporting Evidence Summary This report looks at how the May  
2022 elections in Wales were run, how voters and campaigners found taking part, and  
what lessons can be learned for the future. We have reported separately on elections  
held in England , Northern Ireland and Scotland . On 5 May elections took place  
across the 22 local authority areas in Wales. Overall, people were confident that  
these elections were well-run and were highly satisfied with the process of  
registering to vote and voting. Turnout at these elections was lower than at previous  
comparable elections, and was lowest for voters under 35 years of age. Further  
education and engagement is recommended to support newly enfranchised voters to  
understand and participate in Welsh elections. Almost everyone who voted was able to  
use their preferred method and found it easy to fill in their ballot paper. s engaged  
with voters in a range of ways ahead of the elections and felt able to get their  
views across effectively. Voters generally found it easy to access information about  
the elections, but this did not necessarily translate to them feeling well-informed  
about the elections and who they could vote for. A notable proportion of candidates  
told us that they experienced some form of abuse or intimidation. While robust  
political debate is part of a healthy democracy, sometimes things go too far and  
cross the line into threats, abuse and intimidation. When this happens, it is vital  
that action is taken against those found guilty of these criminal offences. We will  
work with Welsh Government, the police and the wider electoral community to make sure  
we understand what is driving candidate abuse and intimidation, and to ensure this  
issue is addressed as a matter of urgency. Finally, the late introduction of  
legislation making changes to the rules for running the elections brought significant  
additional challenges for Returning Officers and electoral administrators. All  
relevant Governments need to consider the impact of legislative changes on the  
administration of elections and commit to legislation being clear at least six months  
before it is required to be implemented or complied with. Voting at the elections The  
experience of voters at the May 2022 elections Most people were confident that the  
elections were well-run and the vast majority were satisfied with the process of  
registering to vote and voting. Almost all found voting in person at a polling  
station easy to do. Most voters were able to vote using their preferred method and  
found the ballot paper easy to fill in. Turnout at these elections was lower than at  
previous comparable elections, and was lowest amongst voters under 35 years old.  
Overview On 5 May 2022, there were local government elections across all 22  
authorities in Wales. This was the first time that 16 and 17 year olds and foreign  
nationals resident in Wales were able to vote in local elections. Four local  
authorities trialled advanced voting at these elections. We evaluated the pilots, and  
our report - which was published in August - identified several specific areas to be  
addressed if a further roll out of advanced voting is considered for future  
elections. Voters continue to have positive views about how elections are run  
Satisfaction with the registration and voting process remains high People had high  
levels of satisfaction with the process of registering to vote and voting. Our  
research shows that: 81% of people across Wales were satisfied with the process of  
registering to vote. 95% of people who voted were satisfied with the process of  
voting. 71% of people said they were confident that the elections were well-run;  
however, 10% were not confident. These figures are broadly consistent with findings

following the most recent comparable elections in 2017 and the 2021 Senedd election. Most voters were able to obtain enough information on the candidates. Our research shows that the majority of people could obtain information on the candidates standing for election. We found that: 41% of people said it was fairly easy and 18% said it was very easy to obtain the information they required; 19% said it was fairly difficult and 9% said it was very difficult. 45% of people said that they had enough information about the candidates to make an informed decision when voting, but just over a third (34%) tended to disagree. Turnout at these elections was lower than at previous comparable elections. In 2022 there was a decrease of 4% in turnout for the local government elections (38%) compared to 2017 (42%). People were most likely to tell us that they didn't vote because of: lack of time/too busy (18%) not interested/fed up with politics (12%) vote wouldn't have made a difference to the outcome/ doesn't count (11%) medical/health reasons not related to COVID-19 (9%) didn't like the candidates/parties/they didn't represent my views (8%) 94% of people who voted said they were able to use their preferred method of voting (in person, by post or by proxy). This figure was lower amongst in-person voters with a disability or health condition (82%). Most people were confident they knew how to cast their vote. Nearly all voters (97%) found the ballot paper easy to fill in, and three in four (74%) found it very easy. However, this figure was lower amongst voters with a disability or health issue (67%). Almost everyone who voted by post said that they knew how to complete and return their postal vote and found the postal voting instructions useful: 97% said it was easy to complete and return their postal vote, compared to 3% saying it was difficult. Data from electoral administrators shows that: 3.3% of returned postal votes were rejected. The most common reason for postal votes being rejected was that the personal identifiers (signature and/or date of birth) that voters provided on the postal voting statement did not match those that they had provided previously. 0.6% of votes cast were rejected at the count. The most common reason for ballot papers to be rejected at the count was because they were unmarked, with this accounting for almost three-quarters (73%) of all rejected ballot papers. Changes to postal voting statements did not reduce the postal vote rejection rate. In March 2022, Welsh Government, through the Wales Electoral Coordination Board, requested that a trial group of Returning Officers make a change to the postal voting statement to include an additional "today's date" box. The aim was to reduce the postal vote rejection rate due to errors by an elector in providing their personal identifiers (specifically their date of birth). 13 local authorities (out of 22) made this change to the statement. Rejection rate for postal votes 2017 2022 In the trial areas 2.5% 3.3% Not in the trial areas 3.3% 3.1% In the trial areas where the postal voting statement was modified, there was a 0.8% percentage point increase in the rejection rate compared with the most recent comparable elections in 2017. In non-trial areas, there was a 0.2% percentage point reduction in the rejection rate compared with 2017. There is no pattern evident in the data to indicate why this increase may have occurred. We know from our other research that the majority of people who vote by post do so for most elections, so may have become used to using the unmodified version of the form. Welsh Government should consider the available data carefully in making any decision to legislate for permanent changes to the statement. We will also continue to explore ways of improving the electoral system to meet voters' needs. As part of this, we (working alongside the Wales Electoral Coordination Board) will consider evidence about whether changes to postal voting documents or processes could help to reduce the number of postal ballot packs that are rejected at future elections. Further education and engagement is recommended to

support new voters to understand and participate in Welsh elections The Local Government and Elections Wales Act 2021 extended the voting franchise for Welsh local government elections to 16 and 17 year olds and qualifying foreign citizens. To ensure new voters understood this change and knew how to register, we worked with the Welsh Government and partners across Wales to encourage registration and educate new voters about their vote. The Welcome to Your Vote campaign ran for a second time Ahead of the elections we re-ran our 'Welcome to Your Vote' paid voter registration campaign, targeted at newly enfranchised 16-17 year olds, alongside our 'Got 5?' campaign targeting the whole electorate. Alongside the campaigns, we held awareness raising events including 'Welcome to Your Vote Week' and 'Welcome to Your Vote Day' targeted at each of the newly enfranchised groups. During the campaign period, a total of 38,438 people in Wales applied to register to vote, including 3,596 16-17 year olds and 663 qualifying foreign citizens. 1 The most applications were from citizens of Hong Kong, USA, Turkey and the Philippines. 2 We worked with partners to reach under-registered groups Alongside our work to encourage newly enfranchised groups to register, we worked with partner organisations to explain the democratic process to other groups who are typically under-registered or disengaged. Our partners included the British Deaf Association Wales, Mencap Cymru, Welsh Women's Aid, Llamau and Gypsies and Travellers Wales. Ahead of the elections, the Welsh Government provided funding to local authorities to recruit Electoral Registration Support Officers, to help improve registration rates among newly enfranchised and under-registered groups. We worked closely with these officers via the Wales Electoral Coordination Board communications sub-group and the Welsh Government registration partnership. This additional resource was welcomed by local authorities and was crucial in delivering key areas of work to local target groups, especially young people. The strongly held opinion of those local authorities that we talked to was that this resource should continue to be made available to ensure that the foundations already laid are built upon and this important work can continue. Participation by young people is less than in other age groups Our research shows a clear difference in turnout amongst those under the age of 35 compared to all other older age groups. Approximately 1 in 5 (12,338) newly enfranchised 16-17 year olds registered to vote ahead of this election. 3 More focus on political education is needed Ahead of the elections, we developed our democratic education work to help young people understand how to get involved in the democratic process. We published updates to our resources for educators, all linked to the current Welsh curriculum. We partnered with The Democracy Box and have been working with the project's young co-creators and focus group participants aged 16-26 to gain feedback on our resources for young people. Feedback from young people and partners involved in our education work has consistently shown: a lack of understanding as to how to participate in our democratic process a lack of motivation to engage in elections due to insufficient knowledge about candidates, parties and the process in general. Our Public Opinion Tracker 2022 research (carried out in February 2022) also found that: 77% of parents think it's important that children learn the basics about politics, voting and democracy at school more parents think the information their children get around politics, voting and democracy at school is insufficient (31%) than sufficient (22%) The Democracy Box's Youth Voice evaluation report recommended that: "Democratic education should start young and be embedded into the curriculum, but continue as young people go on to do different things in different places in both formal and informal education settings and beyond." The New Curriculum for Wales aims to support learners to become 'ethical, informed citizens who understand and exercise their

human and democratic responsibilities and rights.’ There is therefore an opportunity for democratic awareness to be woven consistently through education, rather than being a standalone topic during an election. We will continue to build on the work already delivered by engaging further with young people and educators across Wales, and with the Welsh Government, to identify more themes and topics our resources can address and to provide teacher training. We will work closely with the Welsh Government to ensure our resources can effectively support the delivery of democratic education in schools through the new curriculum. Recommendation 1 Recommendation 1 Welsh Government should consider continuing to provide an additional resource to local authorities to increase registration rates and support participation amongst newly enfranchised and under-registered groups, building upon the work carried out by the Electoral Registration Support Officers. Campaigning at the elections The experience of campaigning at the May 2022 elections s communicated with voters using a number of methods, including printed material, face-to-face and digital campaigning. The majority of candidates felt they were able to get their views across to voters. Traditional campaigning methods (leafletting and canvassing) were the most popular. Transparency around who is responsible for producing online and digital campaign material remains important to voters. Late legislation relating to the nomination forms caused some confusion for candidates, particularly around the declaration of party affiliation. A notable proportion of candidates responding to our survey said that they experienced some form of abuse or intimidation. In most cases this involved verbal or online abuse, and the majority of instances came from members of the public. We also received reports of poor candidate behaviour from the police. We will work with Welsh Government and the wider electoral community to make sure we understand what is driving candidate abuse and intimidation, and to ensure this issue is addressed as a matter of urgency. Overview Over 3000 candidates stood at the local elections in Wales, representing 24 political parties as well as 711 independent candidates. Of the 1,233 seats available, 74 candidates were elected without a contest. s were able to engage with voters but some raised concerns about the continued impact of Covid s engaged with voters in a range of ways ahead of the elections and the majority felt able to get their views across effectively. s used a variety of methods to communicate with voters At the 2022 elections, voters reported receiving information from candidates in a variety of different ways including: leaflet from a candidate (56%) leaflet from another source (individual or organisation supporting a candidate) (27%) door-to-door canvassing (15%), which was higher in rural areas (23%) word of mouth (15%) untargeted social media posts (14%) advert on social media (12%) Candidates responding to our survey told us that more traditional campaigning methods were used at these elections: 83% put leafletting in their top three campaigning methods, with 45% of respondents saying it was their most used method. Door-to-door canvassing was also popular, with 30% saying it was their most common approach a substantial number of respondents used social media in their campaigns, though it was primarily to supplement traditional methods, rather than being the main tool. 55% put social media in their top three methods of campaigning, with 8% saying it was their most used method, compared to 40% saying it was their third most used when asked about digital campaigning, free methods were far more popular than any paid-for digital methods. 56% of respondents put posts on social media, and 25% asked supporters to share their posts. The most popular paid-for digital campaigning was adverts on social media, although this was utilised by just 7% of respondents around a third (30%) of respondents said they did not use any digital campaigning Covid continued to have an impact on campaigning Our research

showed that Covid continued to have some impact on campaigning. According to candidates who responded to our survey, 65% felt that they were able to effectively get their views across to voters, while 9% disagreed. However, the majority of candidates reported that Covid affected their campaigns in some way, specifically: 60% said that Covid impacted their ability to enlist volunteers 'a lot' or 'a little', and over half (55%) said that fewer opportunities for face-to-face campaigning impacted their campaign to some degree 45% said that concerns about their own health impacted their campaign in some way People want to know who is responsible for producing campaign material Our research confirmed that people continue to value transparency about who is responsible for political campaign activity online at elections. Transparency about who is producing election campaign material is important to build trust We found that: three in five adults in Wales say it is important for them to know who has produced the political information they see online almost half of respondents (49%) said they would trust digital campaign material more if they knew who produced it 40% feel that they cannot currently trust the political information that is available online, whereas only 14% said the information online was trustworthy The UK Government has introduced legislation that will require most campaigners to include information to identify themselves as part of their online campaign material. This new digital imprint requirement will help voters understand who is paying to target them online at future elections and referendums. We will monitor any impact of these new requirements on people's levels of confidence in political information online. Recommendation 2 Recommendation 2 We continue to recommend that Welsh Government ensures that a digital imprint regime is in place in advance of the next set of scheduled elections in Wales. Late legislation caused confusion for some candidates standing for election Two issues have been identified where late legislative changes made ahead of these elections affected candidates. Changes to the nomination process caused confusion The first change was a declaration of party affiliation, where candidates must now declare whether they have been a member of another political party within the 12 months leading up to the day on which the notice of election is published. This caused confusion for some candidates, who either failed to complete this section or completed it incorrectly. This issue is covered in further detail in the Delivering the elections section of this report. The second change related to the use of joint descriptions on the ballot paper. The new legislation permitted two parties to use a joint description on the ballot paper which must include the full registered names of both parties involved. The law for Senedd elections and other UK-wide elections is different, and allows for the use of joint descriptions that are registered with the Electoral Commission and which identify the parties involved but don't necessarily include the full registered party names. At the local government elections, these registered joint descriptions were not permitted under the new legislation. Recommendation 3 Recommendation 3 Welsh Government should review the legislation around joint descriptions ahead of the next scheduled local elections, to allow for registered joint descriptions to be used on the ballot paper, in line with the position for Senedd elections and other elections across the UK. We provided support to candidates throughout the election process We attended candidate sessions at party conferences and stand-alone virtual events, to provide candidates and agents with information on the rules for the elections from the nomination process through to the reporting of campaign spending. We also arranged a bespoke virtual session for independent candidates, and attended local authority briefing sessions to ensure that we were able to provide as much support as possible prior to the nomination period and through to polling day. Increasing

opportunities for supporting candidates and parties We also introduced virtual post-poll advice surgeries for candidates and agents who wanted to ask specific questions. These sessions were popular and the feedback has been positive. Feedback included: almost three quarters of candidates (73%) agreed that the law on election spending and reporting was clear. A fifth (20%) either said they didn't know or neither agreed nor disagreed, and 7% disagreed just under two thirds (64%) agreed that the law on donations and how to check permissibility was clear, compared to 6% who disagreed 69% found the law about personal expenses clear, while 6% disagreed Threats, abuse and intimidation continue to be an issue during elections 3 in 5 candidates who responded to our survey (60%) said that they did not have a problem with threats, abuse or intimidation; however, 40% experienced some kind of problem and 8% experienced a serious problem. Our research found that: of those that said they experienced some kind of abuse, the most common sources were verbal (69%) and online (46%) over two thirds (69%) said the abuse they experienced came from members of the public. Almost 2 in 5 (39%) said they received abuse from other candidates, while 15% received threats or abuse from campaigners or volunteers 16% witnessed threats or intimidation towards those campaigning on their behalf of those who experienced or witnessed abuse, 15% said they reported it to the police, and almost a fifth who experienced threats or abuse said that their experience would discourage them from standing in the future We have received information from the four police Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) in Wales regarding issues experienced during the election period. In general, it was reported that some candidate behaviour was poor, particularly on social media. The police have said that: "The behaviour shown by some candidates at the local elections in May was completely unacceptable." The SPOCs have proposed that they, on behalf of the police forces in Wales, create some guidance for candidates and campaigners on expectations around behaviour during an election period, and that this should be provided to all candidates as part of the nomination process. This new guidance would sit alongside the resources already available on the College of Policing website relating to candidates, and the Code of Conduct for campaigners . We will work with the relevant police forces and SPOCs in the development and support of this material. We will work with Welsh Government and the wider electoral community to make sure we understand what is driving candidate abuse and intimidation and to develop effective responses to protect candidates and campaigners at future elections. Delivering the elections The experience of electoral administration at the May 2022 elections The elections were well run across Wales, but issues with the capacity and resilience of elections teams, coupled with the high recent turnover of Returning Officers created challenges. The late introduction of legislation making changes to the rules for running the elections, brought additional challenges for Returning Officers and administrators. This could be avoided if all legislation relating to electoral events is clear at least six months before it is required to be implemented or complied with. Overview Local authority elections teams were responsible for managing electoral registration, candidate nominations, absent voting, polling stations and the counting of votes. Our evidence shows that the May 2022 polls were well-run, and voters and campaigners reported high levels of satisfaction and confidence. For Returning Officers and electoral administrators, however, these elections presented significant challenges, with one notable issue being the lack of time available to plan as a result of the late introduction of new legislation. There also remain underlying issues relating to the capacity and resilience of election teams. These challenges were felt most strongly in local authorities where capacity was more limited, or in some cases where there had been a

recent change of Returning Officer or Electoral Services Manager. However, with considerable diligence and effort, together with support from the Wales Electoral Coordination Board, local authorities were able to deliver the polls successfully, albeit under pressurised circumstances. The timing of legislative changes meant Returning Officers lacked the certainty they needed to plan. The Welsh Government undertook a review during the summer of 2021, which resulted in the introduction of legislation providing a new set of rules for the local government elections in May 2022. The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (Wales) Rules 2021 and The Local Elections (Communities) (Wales) Rules 2022 came into force on 14 December 2021. The changes in the rules meant, that for the first time, candidates: did not require the signatures of supporters (apart from one witness) could choose not to have their home address shown on the ballot paper had to disclose previous party membership (within the last 12 months) could submit their nomination electronically. Changes were also made to the disqualification criteria which meant that you could stand as a candidate at a local authority election if you were a paid officer or employee of that local authority, but had to resign your post if elected. In March 2022 the new rules were amended by The Local Elections (Miscellaneous and Consequential Amendments) (Wales) Regulations 2022. These amendments were made partially in response to comments received during the short period of consultation on the substantive rules, but also to add provisions that were necessary to support the advance voting pilots in four local authority areas. 4 The late introduction of the new rules created challenges for administrators in preparing for the elections, as well as for us in producing guidance and resources to support them. The key impact was on the nomination forms, which we could not make available until 18 February when the amending legislation had been laid. Electoral administrators who responded to our survey said they found that the introduction of legislation so close to the elections made it difficult for them to plan effectively. Specifically, they reported that the lateness of nomination forms impacted on the availability of guidance and the briefings they could offer for candidates. "Legislation was too late for the local elections. Our candidate briefings started in January and legislation came through late December. How are we supposed to encourage candidates to come forward and stand for election when we don't know the rules and processes well enough in advance particularly given the potential scale of changes that were being proposed?" - Returning Officers need early clarity to be able to deliver significant changes introduced by new legislation. Returning Officers need early clarity to be able to deliver significant changes introduced by new legislation. Significant reform is expected in Wales over the coming years, which will present new challenges for electoral practitioners in Wales. This includes new policies expected to be introduced by Welsh Government as well as changes arising from the UK Government's Elections Act 2022. Governments need to ensure there is effective planning, management and communication with the electoral community around new legislation and avoid significant delays and short notice changes. Recommendation 4 Recommendation 4 We once again urge Welsh Government to ensure that all legislation relating to electoral events is clear (either by Royal Assent to primary legislation, or by laying secondary legislation for approval by the Senedd) at least six months before it is required to be implemented or complied with. We also call on the UK Government to ensure the legislation is clear at least six months before any changes in the Elections Act 2022 are going to be implemented so that Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and electoral administrators have enough time to prepare. Failure to do this creates significant risks to the delivery of well-run polls and public confidence in elections. It means that electoral administrators are

put under intense pressure, with the successful delivery of elections then relying on their goodwill to work additional hours during the pre-election period, which is not sustainable. It also impacts directly on candidates and agents, who have less time to familiarise themselves with the process. Resilience and capacity in election teams remains a significant challenge. In previous reports we have highlighted our concerns about the resilience and capacity of electoral administration structures in Wales. The high turnover of Returning Officers continues and increases the risks to the delivery of well-run polls. The support provided by the Wales Electoral Coordination Board through its events and mentorship scheme was appreciated by new Returning Officers. "The personal support I received from my mentor and other experienced Returning Officers in my region was extremely useful. I also found the support from the Wales Electoral Coordination Board very useful, particularly for making me aware of the critical issues across Wales, and offering solutions." Returning Officers and electoral administrators who responded to our survey said the resilience of electoral services was still an issue, but that these elections were more straightforward to manage compared with the challenge of delivering the Senedd election in 2021. There was an issue in Denbighshire where a printing error was made in the instructions on how to vote, which were sent out to 16,000 postal voters. When the problem was identified, action was taken to contact those voters affected to provide them with the correct instructions. While the number of voters who received incorrect instructions was significant, the number of postal ballot papers re-issued because of the error was small (15). We recognise the pressures faced by Returning Officers and their teams, particularly where officers are new and inexperienced. It is important, however, that voters, candidates and political parties can have confidence in the election process and that the election material they receive is accurate. Following the polls, the Returning Officer in Denbighshire and his team have reviewed how the error had occurred and their processes for dealing with it, and have made a commitment to improving processes in the future. We have also provided advice to the Returning Officer and his staff to support them in improving their proofing processes for future elections. Returning Officers struggled to recruit enough staff to work in the polling station. Recruiting staff to work at the elections in some areas was a problem. Two thirds of administrators who responded to our survey said that recruiting enough suitable staff for polling stations was an issue. In certain cases, administrators reported having to recruit Presiding Officers with limited or no experience of the role in order to ensure polling stations could be staffed appropriately. Also, administrators highlighted that a number of people who had previously undertaken the Presiding Officer role had said they were no longer interested in doing so. Administrators also said they believe this will continue to be an issue, limiting the number of experienced people who will be available to work at each set of polls. The Electoral Commission will continue to work with the Wales Electoral Coordination Board and the wider electoral community across the UK to discuss and identify solutions to the staffing, resilience and capacity challenges experienced by Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and their teams as well as in recruiting sufficient polling station staff. Effective planning and support helped Returning Officers to deliver the elections. The Wales Electoral Coordination Board played an important role supporting Returning Officers and electoral administrators and promoting consistency. As at previous recent elections, the Wales Electoral Coordination Board played an important coordination role for these elections, supporting local authorities by holding all-Wales briefing events for Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers in the autumn of 2021 and



spring of 2022. The Board, which was established in 2017, operates on a voluntary basis to co-ordinate the planning for all-Wales electoral events and activity related to electoral modernisation and reform. As well as this, the Board supports collaboration between Regional and Local Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and key partners in Wales. Those who responded to our survey said they felt that the Board's role was sometimes confusing and that communication could be improved. If the Board was made statutory, as recommended in our reports on elections in Wales in 2017 and 2021, we believe this would begin to address these concerns. National agreement was reached on holding the count the day after the poll rather than overnight. The Wales Electoral Coordination Board had early discussions about the timing of the count, and sought consensus from across Wales. In January 2022, with the support of the main political parties, the Board recommended to all Returning Officers in Wales that the count should take place on the day after polling day and not overnight. This recommendation was implemented across Wales. Similar to feedback received at the Senedd election in 2021, we heard from administrators that daytime counting was a success, and was appreciated by candidates and election staff. It made staffing the count easier and was reported to have improved the overall atmosphere.

**Recommendation 5** Welsh Government should strengthen the Wales Electoral Coordination Board and place it on a statutory footing, which will enable it to play an enhanced role in the delivery of future elections and electoral reforms in Wales. New nomination forms and electronic submission processes made the process easier for candidates but created administrative challenges. New legislation changed the nomination forms for the local elections, and candidates were also able to submit them to Returning Officers electronically for the first time. Legislative changes to the nomination forms caused confusion and created extra work for administrators. While the nominations process generally ran smoothly and provided candidates with different ways to submit their nomination papers, feedback from electoral administrators highlighted issues with the nomination forms and the electronic process for submission. For example: the processing of electronic nominations forms added to the workload at a point when time is limited. Many candidates submitted nomination forms electronically very close to the deadline making it difficult for any issues to be addressed. The forms were felt to be repetitive and not straightforward to complete. "Online applications were a double-edge sword. It made it relatively easy for candidates to submit papers at a time of their choosing and removed the need for them to come into the office to hand them in. At a time when we are extremely busy with nominations, minor errors on the form that could be corrected in seconds in the office, could take a couple of days to resolve via emails." Through the Wales Electoral Coordination Board, work is currently underway to identify improvements to the nominations process that could be introduced for future elections.

**Statement of party affiliation** The new rules also made changes to the nomination forms requiring candidates to provide a statement confirming whether they had been a member of any registered political party during the period of 12 months ending with the day when the notice of election was published (defined as 'the relevant period') and, if so, to provide details of this membership. At the end of March 2022, administrators expressed to us that there was confusion around the information they needed to transfer from the nomination forms to the statement of persons nominated, which they would then make publicly available. If the legislation had been in place earlier, and more time given to consultation with those affected by the changes, this issue may have been avoided. To address the confusion, we issued supplementary guidance to Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers advising them to only extract and

include information from the statement of party membership relating to the relevant period. We also advised Returning Officers and Electoral Services Managers to remind candidates and agents, during the informal check stage, of the specific circumstances under which they needed to include details on their statement of party membership. We are working with Welsh Government to minimise the potential for misunderstanding in future and will consider further additions to our guidance to provide additional clarity. Supporting Evidence Welsh local government elections May 2022 Public opinion research tables 2022 Wales Local election electoral data 1. Data provided by UK Government Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. ■ Back to content at footnote 1 2. The data on applications by newly-qualified foreign nationals includes applications by those with dual or multiple nationalities, even where one or more of these nationalities would have historically granted the applicant the right to vote in UK elections prior to the extension of the franchise in Wales. It is not possible to discern from the data what proportion of applicants with dual or multiple nationalities are truly ‘newly-qualified’ foreign nationals as the specific nationalities of these applicants are not given. The data also covers applicants from Zimbabwe, the Maldives and Fiji, who are eligible to vote as Commonwealth citizens and therefore are not technically ‘newly-qualified’ foreign nationals. Similarly, the data includes applicants from Hong Kong, irrespective of franchise eligibility. Finally, the data covers online applications only and applicants whose nationality is unrecorded. ■ Back to content at footnote 2 3. Total number of registrations between 1 May 2021 and 14 April 2022. ■ Back to content at footnote 3 4. These were initiated by Welsh Government under its framework for electoral modernisation (<https://gov.wales/written-statement-framework-electoral-reform>). ■ Back to content at footnote 4 Page history First published: 21 September 2022 Last updated: 21 September 2022 Related content Report on the May 2022 local elections in England Read our report on the May 2022 local elections in England Report on the May 2022 Scottish council elections Read our report on the May 2022 Scottish council elections. Report on the May 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly election Read our report on the May 2022 Northern Ireland Assembly election Looking back at the May 2022 elections Read our latest blog post on looking back at the May 2022 elections.