

Better detection and management of duplicate registration applications | Electoral Commission Search Better detection and management of duplicate registration applications You are in the Modernising electoral registration: feasibility studies section Home A modern electoral register Modernising electoral registration: feasibility studies First published: 26 July 2019 Last updated: 8 June 2021 Summary We identified two main ways in which duplicates could be identified and managed through the development of a “look up” tool. “Voter-focused” approaches would take the form of an online “look up” facility for electors to check whether they were already registered. They could be local authority devised solutions, or more centralised (national or UK-wide) lookup tools. “ERO-focused” approaches would involve either developing systems to allow EROs to identify and manage duplicates within their respective local EMS systems, or through a more centralised process enabling the identification and management of duplicates across multiple registers. Summary The key to all solutions is the creation of a unique identifier for each elector. This would enable the identification of duplicates either within local registers, or across registers, depending on the particular solution implemented. Unique identifier as prerequisite for managing duplicate records The key to identifying duplicate records in one register, as well as across multiple registers, is a unique identifier. Although it would seem to be a simple solution, implementing a unique identifier per elector across the 372 registers would require several issues to be addressed first. Solutions We identified two main ways in which duplicate registration applications might be better identified and managed within the electoral registration system: “Voter-focused” approaches These would take the form of an online “look up” facility for electors to check whether they were already registered. “ERO-focused” approaches These would involve either developing systems to allow EROs to identify and manage duplicates within their respective EMS systems, without altering the current system of decentralised, local authority-based registers (in Great Britain), or moving towards more centralised registers allowing EROs to identify and manage duplicates across multiple registers. Voter-focused solutions Local lookup tool Under this scenario, each local authority would have its own lookup function that citizens could use to check if they were registered to vote within the local authority, obtaining access through their local authority online account. National lookup tool Each nation (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) would have its own lookup tool accessible from a central location, e.g. the Register to Vote website. The lookup tool could be built into the electoral registration process. The system would not allow a citizen to continue with a registration application if it detected that the elector was already registered at the address provided. Alternatively, it could be a stand-alone tool that a citizen could use to check whether they were registered, based on information provided. UK-wide lookup tool A single lookup tool would be developed for citizens to check if they were registered to vote. It would be accessible from a central location, e.g. the Register to Vote website and linked to all registers across the UK. This model could be integrated into the current electoral registration process and automatically detect instances where citizens were already registered. ERO-focused solutions Decentralised registers with unique identifiers EMS systems would provide the tools to identify duplicates within a single, local register, facilitated by the allocation of unique identifiers. Single view of all registers with unique identifiers Under this scenario EROs would continue to maintain separate registers, but be able to view (read-only) all entries on all 372 registers. This would enable the comparison of all registers to identify possible duplicates. Four national registers with unique

identifiers Northern Ireland already has a single national register and the Welsh Government is considering this as an option for Wales. National registers would also be created for England and Scotland, with national keepers of the registers assigned. Duplicates could be identified and managed across multiple registers within each nation. Single, UK wide register with unique identifiers This would require restructuring the electoral registration process so that there is one UK-wide register, rather than 372 separate registers. This would enable the identification of duplicates across all UK registers. It could also facilitate a UK-wide lookup function. A keeper of the register would need to be designated. 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