Addressing the challenges of accuracy and completeness | Electoral Commission Addressing the challenges of accuracy and completeness You are in the Accuracy and completeness of electoral registers section Home Our research Accuracy and completeness of electoral registers First published: 23 September 2019 Last updated: 26 September 2019 Overview The data and findings presented in this study further supports our position, first set out in 2015, that the electoral registration system in Great Britain requires modernisation to provide the best possible opportunity for ensuring that as many people as possible are correctly registered. This research confirms that age and mobility continue to be the strongest variables associated with lower levels of completeness. Plans to reform the annual canvass starting in 2020 are an important first step, enabling EROs to focus resources on households that have changed composition, but there is more that could and should be done to modernise registration processes in Great Britain. Our vision of a modern electoral register is one which: Uses trusted public data to keep itself accurate and complete throughout the year without relying solely on action by individuals; and Makes it as easy as possible for electors to ensure their own registration record is accurate and complete, particularly ahead of elections and referendums. Earlier this year we published the findings from a series of feasibility studies exploring how electoral registration reforms could be delivered, to help inform the debate about registration reform. These studies looked at the potential for giving EROs access to data from other public service providers; integration of electoral registration into other public service transactions; and automatic or more automated forms of registration. The options explored in the studies could help address some of the specific challenges highlighted in this research. For example: For people who have recently changed address, including those who move more frequently, registering to vote may not always be an immediate priority. Regular access to reliable data from a wider range of public services about people who have recently updated their address details would allow EROs to make contact directly with them at their new address to encourage them to register to vote. Integrating electoral registration applications into other public service transactions could make it easier for individuals to keep their registration details up to date and accurate. This could be particularly effective for those who have moved recently and who are in the process of updating their details with other agencies and public bodies. Making better use of existing public data sources could also help to improve levels of completeness among some of the specific under-registered groups identified in this study. Data from the education sector – such as information held by the Education and Skills Funding Agency Learning Records Service, which collects data relating to learners in England, Wales and Northern Ireland registering for relevant post-14 qualifications, and the Scottish Qualifications Authority – could help EROs identify attainers and other young people. Also, data from the Department for Work and Pensions could potentially be used by EROs to register young people to vote automatically when they are allocated their National Insurance number ahead of their 16th birthday. Our feasibility studies found that these reforms were feasible from a technical and operational perspective and could be implemented without radically altering the structure of the electoral registration system in the UK. While reforms of this nature undoubtedly raise important questions about data sharing, data protection and the implications of automatic registration, they offer considerable potential to address the challenges of achieving accurate and complete registers in Great Britain. We want to encourage a wider debate on the potential benefits of further modernisation and electoral registration reform and look forward to

discussing the findings of our feasibility studies with governments and other interested groups.