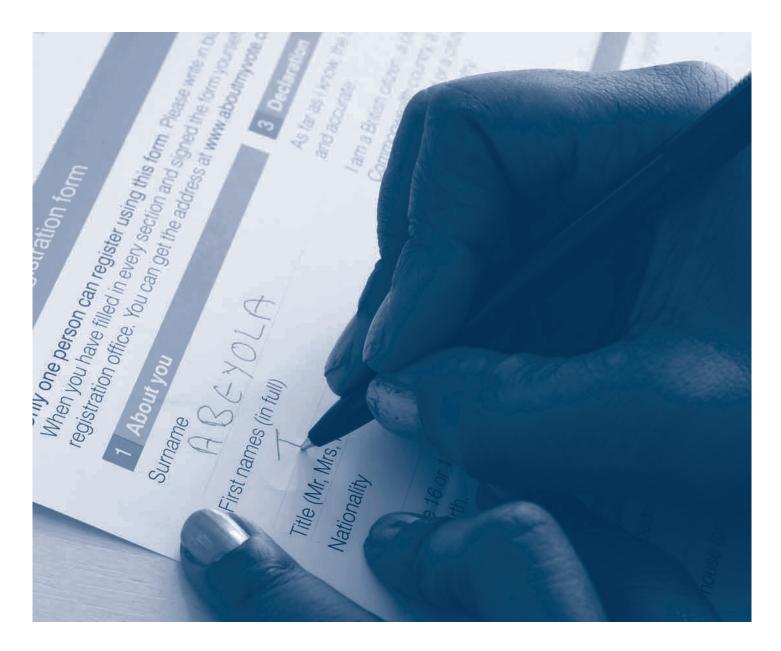# Performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers in Great Britain

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Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 9A of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000

Translations and other formats

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Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by the UK Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA). Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the UK's democratic process by the regulation of party and election finance and setting standards for well-run elections. Our current corporate plan sets our strategic direction over the five years from April 2008. The aims and objectives of the plan are underpinned by two key priorities – demonstrating and enhancing our effectiveness as the regulator of party and election finance and leading the drive for increasingly high standards of electoral administration, including electoral registration. Our objectives for the period 2008–09 to 2012–13 are:

- Integrity and transparency of party and election finance
- Complete and accurate electoral registers supported by a well-run electoral registration process
- Well-run elections and referendums which produce results that are accepted
- Public understanding of the way our democracy works
- Fair boundary arrangements for elections

Performance standards for electoral administration

1.2   Section 67 of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (EAA) inserted new sections 9A, 9B and 9C into PPERA. These sections allow the Commission to set and monitor performance standards for electoral services and to collect information on the costs of electoral services from Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), Returning Officers (ROs) and Referendum Counting Officers (RCOs) in Great Britain. The powers do not apply in Northern Ireland or to local government elections in Scotland. Under these provisions, the Commission may:

- Determine and publish standards of performance for relevant electoral officers in Great Britain (EROs, ROs and RCOs)
- Direct relevant officers to provide the Commission with reports regarding their performance against the published standards
- Publish its assessment of the level of performance by relevant officers against the published standards

1.3   Since these new powers came into force in September 2006, the Commission has consulted widely with electoral administrators and other stakeholders to develop the final performance standards presented in this document. The following pages contain the 10 performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers in Great Britain and the Commission's vision for quality electoral services, to which the standards refer. Additional guidance for reporting against the standards by EROs will be issued in September 2008.

2. Performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers

Completeness and accuracy of electoral registration records

Performance standard 1: Using information sources to verify entries on the register of electors and identify potential new electors Subject: Completeness and accuracy of electoral registration records		Supports vision themes: Integrity – a secure process for registration and voting
This standard aims to ensure EROs use appropriate sources of information to verify records on the register of electors and identify potential new electors.		
Performance against the standard	**Assessment**	**Evidence to support assessment**
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO relies solely on annual canvass returns and rolling registration applications to maintain the register of electors and uses no other sources of information to verify records.		
	2. The ERO uses the records they have the power to inspect to verify entries on the register of electors during the annual canvass period only. The ERO ensures that electors who are reported as having moved or died are removed.		• Details of what records are checked
Performance standard	3. The ERO proactively identifies and uses the records they are entitled to inspect, throughout the year, including during the annual canvass period, to verify and validate data held on the electoral register.		• Details of what records are checked and when
Above the performance standard	4. The ERO takes a proactive approach throughout the year to identify and contact potential electors who may have moved into, or within, the local authority area, such as by using council tax records to identify residents of newly occupied properties.		• Details of what records are checked and when • Details of what contact is made and what action is taken

Performance standard 2: Maintaining the property database		Supports vision themes:
Subject: Completeness and accuracy of electoral registration records		Integrity – a secure process for registration and voting
This standard aims to ensure EROs use all appropriate sources of information available to them to ensure all relevant properties are included in the property database.		
Performance against the standard		**Assessment**	**Evidence to support assessment**
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO takes no steps to maintain an accurate property database.		
	2. The ERO updates the property database on an annual basis only, following the annual canvass.		• Details of when the system has been updated
Performance standard	3. The ERO maintains a property database on a continuous basis throughout the year, using available records including council tax, planning and building control and the authority's Local Land and Property Gazetteer (LLPG)/Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG).		• Details of what records have been checked and how often
Above the performance standard	4. The ERO also uses relevant external sources, such as Royal Mail and/or Land Registry/Registers of Scotland, and undertakes other activities to update the property database.		• Details of what records have been checked and how often, or attempt to check records • Details of contacts made with external sources

Performance standard 3: House-to-house enquiries		Supports vision themes:
Subject: Completeness and accuracy of electoral registration records		**Integrity** – a secure process for registration and voting
This standard aims to ensure that EROs make the necessary house-to-house enquiries to ensure that all eligible residents are registered (section 9A and 10(5) of RPA 1983).		

Performance against the standard		Assessment	Evidence to support assessment
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO has no plan setting out when to carry out house-to-house enquiries.		
	2. The ERO has a written plan setting out when to carry out house-to-house enquiries but has not met the objectives identified in their plan.		• Plan and timescales
Performance standard	3. The ERO has a comprehensive written plan ensuring that properties which have not responded to the annual canvass and, where the ERO is not otherwise satisfied that eligible electors are resident, are subject to house-to-house enquiries on at least one or more occasions. Progress against the plan is monitored including actions such as recording contact with residents made by canvassers.		• Canvassing plan • Canvass results records
Above the performance standard	4. The ERO has developed and put in place a specific strategy for carrying out house-to-house enquiries. This should include: • Identifying when and how house-to-house enquiries should be carried out • Considering any needs or difficulties associated with particular areas and preparing accordingly • The monitoring of canvasser performance • Providing for personal visits to be carried out throughout the year in connection with the identification of eligible residents in conjunction with plans for identifying potential newly eligible residents		• Canvassing strategy

Integrity

Performance standard 4: Maintaining the integrity of registration and absent vote applications **Subject:** Integrity		**Supports vision themes**: **Integrity** – a secure process for registration and voting
This standard aims to ensure that EROs have a process in place to identify any patterns of activity that might indicate electoral malpractice.		
Performance against the standard	**Assessment**	**Evidence to support assessment**
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO does not carry out any checks to ensure the integrity of registration and absent vote applications.		
	2. The ERO has an informal system in place to check the integrity of registration and absent vote applications but does not document these.		
Performance standard	3. The ERO has a comprehensive written plan outlining what steps are to be taken to deal with concerns about specific registration or absent vote applications. Suspicious registration and absent vote applications that meet the criteria identified in the plan are referred to local police/Single Point of Contact (SPOC), with whom the ERO has appropriate links. The ERO also has in place a threshold number of absent vote applications being directed to any one address. The ERO retains registration forms for the life of the register and original absent vote applications are kept until		• Written plan • Details of what the threshold is for the number of absent vote applications being directed to any one address.

Integrity (cont)

Performance against the standard		Assessment	Evidence to support assessment
	the application is cancelled, or replaced by a new form.		
Above the performance standard	4. The ERO has carried out a risk assessment for identifying and dealing with registration and absent vote applications which may be of concern, in particular applications from multi-resident properties, those requesting signature waivers for absent votes, and multiple applications for redirection of absent votes to a single address. The ERO acknowledges all applications for registration on receipt of the application, and not only on grant or refusal of the application.		• Written plan • Details of what the threshold is for the number of absent vote applications being directed to any one address. • Risk assessment documentation
	5. The ERO continuously evaluates the risk assessment for identifying and dealing with registration and absent vote applications which may be of concern. The ERO engages with staff in other council services to carry out checks and offers advice to staff of multi-elector establishments such as landlords, wardens, care staff and other accommodation administrators on the registration and absent voting process. The ERO carries out checks on the signatures and dates of birth provided on a sample of absent vote applications against any other signature or date of birth that they hold or that they are entitled to inspect such as rolling registration application forms.		• Risk assessment documentation • Written plan • Details of what the threshold is for the number of absent vote applications being directed to any one address • Details of who the ERO engages with and how often and what is done • Details of how the sample of absent vote applications has been devised • Details of findings of checks

Performance standard 5: Supply and security of the register and absent voter lists		Supports vision themes:
Subject: Integrity		Integrity – a secure process for registration and voting
This standard aims to ensure that once published, EROs ensure the full register is made available for public inspection and supplies copies of the register and absent voter lists to those prescribed in legislation.		
Performance against the standard	**Assessment**	**Evidence to support assessment**
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO has not supplied electoral registration information to those entitled to receive it.		
Performance standard	2. The ERO publishes and supplies the electoral register and absent voter lists to those entitled to receive them. The ERO provides training or guidance to those staff who will be supervising access to the register as well as guidance for recipients of the register as to the correct usage of their copy of the register.		- Details of publication of the register date - Training plan or copy of guidance given to staff - Copy of guidance given to recipients
Above the performance standard	3. The ERO has a recorded complaints procedure in respect of the supply and publication of the electoral register. The ERO maintains a written record of any complaints received and action taken. The ERO records all transactions of sales and supply of the full and edited register and maintains an up to date record of the details of those organisations entitled to receive it.		- Log of complaints or enquiries, and action taken due to them - Record of transactions and sales

Participation

Performance standard 6: Public awareness strategy		Supports vision themes:
Subject: Participation		**User focus** – an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors
This standard aims to ensure that EROs develop and maintain an effective and appropriate public awareness strategy.		
Performance against the standard	**Assessment**	**Evidence to support assessment**
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO has no specific public awareness strategy in place.		
	2. The ERO does not maintain a written public awareness strategy, and relies on unstructured management controls such as oral or written updates. Objectives, risks and resources are not formally documented.		
Performance standard	3. The public awareness strategy is documented including: • Identifying target audiences • Clearly defined objectives and success measures • Risks – identification and mitigation • Resources (financial and staffing) • Evaluation plan which records the results of the activities undertaken		• Written strategy • Evaluation plan • Risk register

Participation (cont)

Performance against the standard		Assessment	Evidence to support assessment
Above the performance standard	4. In addition to the above, the public awareness strategy also includes: • a specific participation budget with a breakdown of how this will be used • assessment of the needs of those different audiences and the most effective methods of reaching them • plans for different activities at different parts of the year • evaluation that leads to proactive analysis of lessons learned in order to inform recommendations for new or improved participation activity for the future		• Written strategy • Evaluation plan • Risk register • Participation budget • Evidence of proactive evaluation such as lessons learned reports and/or recommendations to improve future activity

Performance standard 7: Working with partners		Supports vision themes:
Subject: Participation		User focus – an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors
This standard aims to ensure that EROs have researched the merits in working with appropriate partners, and work with them where appropriate to promote electoral participation.		
Performance against the standard	**Assessment**	**Evidence to support assessment**
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO has given no consideration to working with any possible partners to promote electoral participation.		
	2. The ERO has identified the possibility and benefits of working with partners but has not acted upon the findings of this work.		
Performance standard	3. The ERO has consulted other departments of the local authority to promote electoral participation and has evaluated the costs/benefits of a joint working arrangement, and has ensured that duplication of effort and unnecessary expenditure is avoided.		• Records of meetings/discussions/ correspondence with other departments • Record of work undertaken (such as evaluation plan showing results of joint working)
Above the performance standard	4. The ERO actively engages with other departments of the local authority and has identified and consulted with external bodies (such as other authorities, other EROs, local media and community groups) to determine whether working with partners can help achieve the objectives of the public awareness strategy. Joint work has been undertaken where appropriate. The ERO has also developed an evaluation methodology for all activities undertaken with external partners and uses this to plan future work.		• Records of meetings/discussions/ correspondence with other departments and external bodies • Record of work undertaken and evaluation of the specific value added by joint working • Plans for future joint working building on the relationships developed

Performance standard 8: Accessibility and communication of information		Supports vision themes:
Subject: Participation		**User focus** – an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors

This standard aims to ensure that EROs effectively communicate electoral registration information and provide a simple and user friendly way to access the information to encourage registration applications.

Performance against the standard		Assessment	Evidence to support assessment
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO provides information in one format and has not taken account of the needs of different audiences (for example translation or alternative formats). There are no response mechanisms in place (such as phone, website or email) to ensure that information is correctly and appropriately communicated.		
Performance standard	2. The ERO takes note of relevant legislation and specific research that has been carried out and/or consultation with appropriate organisations to determine the appropriate languages and formats to communicate with the relevant audiences. The ERO then communicates information in the most accessible way (website/hard-copy/telephony services) in the appropriate languages and formats. The ERO ensures that all outgoing communication provides the contact details of the local office to allow interested parties to respond and find out further information.		• Record of research undertaken • Examples of how the appropriate languages and formats have been decided • Details of how the most accessible method of communicating information has been decided • Details of the appropriate number of communication mediums have been decided
Above the performance standard	3. The ERO is responsive to changes in the demographics of the local authority area and actively researches whether further formats or languages are necessary. The ERO's staff identify and provide support for those who have difficulty filling out the necessary forms both at their offices and at the electors' homes (when requested) throughout the year. The ERO measures and records the success of different dissemination methods and bases future work on this evaluation.		In addition to the evidence outline above: • Details of the appropriate number of communication mediums have been decided • Details of what monitoring takes place • Details outlining method for providing support • Evaluation plan

Planning and organisation

Performance standard 9: Planning for rolling registration and the annual canvass		Supports vision themes:
Subject: Planning and organisation		**Professionalism** – a clear and consistent approach to delivery
This standard aims to ensure that EROs have developed robust planning processes for rolling registration and the annual canvass.		
Performance against the standard	**Assessment**	**Evidence to support assessment**
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO does not have a comprehensive written plan, and relies on unstructured management controls such as oral or written updates, and past experience only. Objectives, risks and resources are not documented.		
Performance standard	2. The ERO has put in place formal, written plans for rolling registration and the annual canvass. These should include: • Clearly defined objectives and success measures • Risks – identification and mitigation • Recruitment of temporary/permanent staff where needed • Financial resources • Evaluation plan recording the results of the activities undertaken		• Plan(s) • Risk register • Identification of required resources • Business continuity arrangements
Above the performance standard	3. In addition to the above, the ERO has: • Planned for a specific budget for rolling registration and for the annual canvass, with a breakdown of how this will be used • Identified and assessed the needs of the most hard to reach audiences • A business continuity plan/succession plan to mitigate unforeseen circumstances such as staff absences		• Plan as described above • Business continuity plan

Performance standard 10: Training			Supports vision themes:		
Subject: Planning and organisation			Professionalism – a clear and consistent approach to delivery		
This standard aims to ensure that EROs have provided appropriate training for staff to deliver the rolling registration and annual canvass processes.					
Performance against the standard			Assessment	Evidence to support assessment	
Not currently meeting the performance standard	1. The ERO provides no training to either permanent or temporary staff other than a basic induction.				
	2. The ERO provides basic relevant training for permanent members of staff only, to ensure awareness and understanding of legislative requirements.			• Schedule of training activities	
Performance standard	3. The ERO provides the relevant training to both permanent and temporary staff to ensure awareness and understanding of legislative requirements.			• Schedule of training activities	
Above the performance standard	4. The ERO has put in place a comprehensive written training plan for both permanent and temporary staff, and evaluates the effectiveness of the plan (by using a system of feedback and review) on an annual basis.			• Schedule of training activities • Training plan • Evaluation plan and reports	

3.   Vision for quality electoral services

In the United Kingdom people have the right to say who governs them. They therefore have a right to vote (or not to vote) in secret, for who they want, in a way that is easy for them, and to have their vote counted. They expect that the core values of public office should be enshrined in electoral services (registration and elections) and should support the modernising and ethical standards agenda in public service.

	This means electors can expect…	This means candidates and parties can expect…	This means those involved in administration can expect…	This means those involved in Government and the Electoral Commission can expect…
Integrity – a secure process for registration and voting	⚷ To know information about them is accurate and to be clear how it is used ⚷ Their vote is confidential and they can make it free from pressure ⚷ To know their vote is counted	⚷ Processes which are transparent and checked ⚷ Accurate results	⚷ Support from bodies such as the Electoral Commission, government departments and local authorities ⚷ Independence from political parties ⚷ Police, courts and prosecutors who are conversant with electoral law	⚷ The results of any election are accepted by the public and candidates ⚷ The voter has confidence in both the process and the results
User focus – an easy and accessible process for candidates and electors	☺ A voting process that is easy to understand ☺ To have a choice of ways to vote ☺ To be able to vote in a way that suits their lifestyle and needs ☺ Information and advice which is accurate, prompt and easy to understand	☺ To know how to stand for election ☺ Consistency of approach and realistic timescales ☺ Clarity and impartiality in the process ☺ A clear process of redress	☺ External suppliers who deliver what is expected of them	☺ Electoral staff are proactive in encouraging registration and voting ☺ Participating in democracy seen as part of active citizenship
Professionalism – a clear and consistent approach to delivery	✓ To know if they are eligible to register and vote ✓ To know how and when to register and what to do if they move ✓ To know where to get information and advice ✓ To know who and what they are voting for ✓ Young people to be educated about registering and voting	✓ Those involved in administration of the process to be fully conversant with electoral law ✓ Consistent application of electoral law and processes ✓ Clear and timely information, advice and guidance ✓ An appropriate balance between speed and quality in the process	✓ The legislative framework and associated rules are clear and are consistently applied ✓ There is focused and timely training and guidance ✓ Legislation is introduced in a timely manner ✓ The electoral service is recognised as a customer facing service	✓ The service operates in line with the legislation ✓ There is consistency in service delivery
Value for money – efficient and effective service delivery	£ Effective use of public money	£ Electoral administrators to have the right skills £ Timely quality checks to be carried out	£ Adequate resources are available to deliver what is expected £ Local context, issues and priorities are recognised £ Appropriately skilled staff are available in areas such as project management, contract management, and ICT.	£ Maximum registration of eligible citizens £ Maximum participation in elections £ Appropriate use of public money

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Democracy matters