

Returning Officer role and responsibilities

- 3.4 As RO, you play a central role in the democratic process. Your role is to ensure that the election is administered effectively and that, as a result, the experience of voters and those standing for election is a positive one. You should set out at an early stage what you want to achieve and what success would look like for you.
- 3.5 As local government RO you are personally responsible for the conduct of the local government election, including:
- publishing the notice of election
 - administering the nomination process
 - printing the ballot papers
 - publishing the notice of poll, statement of persons nominated and notice of situation of polling stations
 - the provision of polling stations
 - appointing Presiding Officers and Poll Clerks
 - managing the postal voting process
 - verifying and counting the votes
 - declaring the result
- 3.7 Your duties as RO are separate from your duties as a local government officer. As RO you are not responsible to the council but are directly accountable to the courts as an independent statutory office holder.
- 3.8 While you can appoint one or more persons to discharge any or all of your functions, you cannot delegate your personal responsibility for delivering the election

Your skills and knowledge

- 3.9 You should have a working knowledge of the legislation governing the conduct of the election. This means that, in addition to having a clear understanding of your statutory functions, you should have an overview of what the legislation contains and an understanding of how it affects the administration of the election, so that you can review, question where necessary, and quality-assure the whole process.
- 3.10 There are management responsibilities attached to your role. For example, you should:
- command the required staff and resources to deliver a well-run election
 - draw the necessary support, skills and expertise from across your own local authority
 - oversee the planning, project management and risk management of the election and incorporate any lessons learnt from previous polls
 - identify and oversee any actions necessary to mitigate any issues arising
 - ensure that staff are appropriately trained to deliver the roles required of them
 - support the staff administering the election and provide appropriate oversight of their work
 - provide direction to staff, monitor progress and receive regular feedback on activities
 - if you are not also the ERO, maintain an effective working relationship with them

- maintain an effective working relationship with your police Single Point of Contact (SPOC)
- ensure that election accounts are completed in a timely manner

Your role and responsibilities as Electoral Registration Officer [extracts from Electoral Commission website]

As Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) you are responsible for compiling and maintaining the register of electors.

What are the duties of an Electoral Registration Officer?

The statutory functions, including the duties of the ERO, are set out in legislation. Further duties can be imposed by a direction of the Secretary of State.

The Secretary of State has a power to direct EROs in the discharge of their functions but can only exercise this power of direction on, and in accordance with, a recommendation of the Electoral Commission.

The local authority that appointed you as ERO must provide the resources needed to discharge your statutory functions. Any expenses properly incurred by you in performance of your functions must be paid by the local authority that appointed you.

Maintaining the electoral register

As ERO you have a duty to maintain:

- a register of parliamentary electors
- a register of local government electors

These registers contain details of those who are registered to vote and must be combined as far as is practicable. Any reference to the register in our guidance should be taken as a reference to the combined registers unless otherwise stated.

Ensuring registers are accurate and complete

You need to publish registers that are as accurate and complete as possible.

By accurate we mean that there are no false entries and by complete we mean that every person who is entitled to have an entry in an electoral register is registered.

You have a duty under Section 9A of the Representation People Act 1983 (as amended by the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013) to take all necessary steps to comply with your duty to maintain the electoral register, and to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, that all those eligible (and no others) are registered in it.

The steps required under Section 9A include:

- sending at least one canvass communication to any address
- sending a canvass form more than once
- making on one or more occasions house to house inquiries
- making on one or more occasions contact by telephone
- making contact by such other means as the registration officer thinks appropriate with persons who do not have an entry in a register

- inspecting any records held by any person which he is permitted to inspect under or by virtue of any enactment or rule of law
- providing training to persons under his direction or control in connection with the carrying out of the duty

You must actively consider each of the steps listed and take all such action that you consider necessary in order to fulfil your duty to maintain the register of electors. The steps do not need to be taken in any particular order.

If you fail to take these steps, you may be in breach of official duty, which on summary conviction can result in a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

You are also required by law to take specified steps to follow up on particular canvass non-responses, including making contact with the property or an individual.

Any potential new electors identified will also need to be sent an Invitation to register (ITR) and a registration application form, and you will need to take the specified steps – issuing two reminders and a personal visit - to follow up with any ITR non-responders. These processes will not all be linear and will need to be carried out concurrently.

These duties apply throughout the year and not just during the canvass period.