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# the register

News from  
the Electoral Commission



Issue 12 – January 2012

## At least 6 million people not registered to vote...where do we go from here?

**In December 2011 we published major new findings into the accuracy and completeness of the electoral registers in Great Britain.**

The new research estimated the December 2010 registers to be between 85–87% complete, with at least six million eligible people missing from the register. This showed an increase in the number not on the registers compared to the last major study of this kind – in 2000 just less than 4 million people were estimated to be not registered, some 8–9%.

The new figures underline the need for everyone who cares about democracy in the UK to play their part in improving registration levels across the UK. So what steps can all those involved in the democratic process take in light of these findings?

[Read more about the electoral registers in Great Britain >](#)



### News in brief

#### Service personnel could be missing out on having their say

We are working with the Ministry of Defence to encourage service personnel to register to vote, particularly as some members of the armed forces think that they can't vote if they're based overseas on polling day. We provide information on how they can vote by post or by appointing a trusted person (a proxy) to vote on their behalf on our website at [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/armedforces](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/armedforces)

## The Electoral Commission

### Events

#### Monday 30 January 2012

Chair of the Electoral Commission, Jenny Watson, will be speaking at the Association of Electoral Administrators' Annual Conference.

Deadline for quarter four 2011 political parties' quarterly donation and loan returns.

Deadline for quarter four 2011 unincorporated associations' quarterly report of gifts received.

#### Friday 23 March 2012

Deadline to register a new party or to change existing registered party details for the elections on 3 May 2012.

#### Tuesday 3 April 2012

National Register to Vote Day. Ahead of the 18 April registration deadline, use your website, Facebook, Twitter and newsletters to encourage your members, followers or local residents to register to vote at [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk).

#### Wednesday 18 April 2012

Deadline to register to vote for the May 2012 elections.

Throughout February, Unit Registration Officers will be holding registration days at bases across Great Britain. Members of the armed forces and their families can also print off and fill in a registration form on our website.

You can help us get the message out to service personnel that it can be quick and easy to register to vote by posting a link to our dedicated webpage for members of the armed forces in your newsletter, on your website or via your social media channels.

View more at [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/armedforces](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk/armedforces)

## New performance standards for Returning Officers

In December 2011, we published a new set of performance standards for Returning Officers in Great Britain, following consultation with key stakeholders. We based the new framework on lessons we learnt from monitoring Counting Officers' performance before and during the May 2011 polls, rather than reporting on it after the event.

We now place more emphasis on key outputs, which we believe if achieved, will deliver polls to a higher standard in Great Britain. By monitoring performance throughout the processes of planning and delivering the polls, it will allow us to intervene where any issues are identified in order to recommend improvements prior to polling day.

[View the new performance standards and consultation responses >](#)

## Scottish independence referendum

In response to the publication of the Scottish Government's consultation on the independence referendum on 25 January, Electoral Commissioner for Scotland, John McCormick, said:

"We welcome the opportunity to give full and careful consideration to the Scottish Government's proposals at this stage. Our priority is to ensure any referendum is well run, transparent and focused on voters and we will share our experience and expertise in running referendums when we respond to both parliaments and governments on their respective consultations."

[Read our full statement on the Scottish referendum, including our principles for running referendums >](#)

## New Electoral Commissioner for Northern Ireland

On 1 January 2012 we welcomed Anna Carragher as the new Electoral Commissioner for Northern Ireland. Ms Carragher brings a wealth of experience to the Commission as former Controller of BBC Northern Ireland, previous Chair of the Grand Opera House Trust in Belfast, and through her recent appointment to the Northern Ireland Arts Council.

## Publications

### January 2012

Polling station handbooks and quick guides available online (hard copies will be available in February).

Doubtful ballot booklets.

Code of conduct for observers.

### February 2012

Media handbooks for the local government elections in England, Scotland and Wales. The Media handbook for the Mayor of London and London Assembly elections is already available on [our media resources webpage](#).

Electoral integrity guidance for Royal Mail, party workers and police.

Reports into allegations of electoral malpractice at the May 2011 polls.

Report on campaign spending at the May 2011 polls.

Free practical materials for electoral administrators to encourage voter registration across Great Britain and provide voter information in Scotland. Available on [www.dopolitics.org.uk](http://www.dopolitics.org.uk).

### Thursday 9 February 2012

Publication of regulated donee donations and loans.

### Wednesday 22 February 2012

Publication of quarter four 2011 donations and loans.

### March 2012

Evaluation of data-matching trials.

### Thursday 8 March 2012

Publication of regulated donee donations and loans.

[View all our publications >](#)

Ms Carragher will play an important role in ensuring that the recommendations made in our recent report on the 2011 Northern Ireland Assembly elections are implemented, as well as working towards full transparency in the reporting of donations and loans to political parties in Northern Ireland.

[Read more about the Electoral Commissioners >](#)

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## **Electoral Commission Chief Executive urges electoral community to prepare now for individual electoral registration**

In his speech on 19 January at this year's SOLACE elections conference, Peter Wardle, Chief Executive at the Electoral Commission, warned the electoral community that 2015 and the introduction of individual electoral registration is not far off. He encouraged Electoral Registration Officers to engage with the change now to work out what is best for voters to ensure that their voices are heard, and that they trust the system that enables that to happen.

[Read the full speech here >](#)

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## **Deadline to register a party for May 2012 elections**

We encourage everyone applying to register a new party or to change existing registered party details for the elections on 3 May 2012 to submit their applications as soon as possible. We need to receive all applications before 23 March 2012 for them to be effective for the May elections.

We will try to process any applications we receive after this date, but cannot guarantee that late applications will be processed before the registers are frozen on 27 March 2012.

[View our guidance on registering a party >](#)

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## **Training sessions for candidates and agents in Wales**

We are facilitating training sessions across Wales for candidates and agents standing in the local government elections in May 2012. If you are standing on behalf of one of Wales' four main political parties then these sessions will be coordinated by the Commission and the party centrally, but we will also be organising separate sessions for candidates from smaller parties and potential independent candidates. If anyone is interested in attending these sessions, please contact Ceri John by emailing [cjohn@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:cjohn@electoralcommission.org.uk)

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## Guidance for May 2012 elections

In December we published the core guidance for those administering elections in May 2012, as well as for candidates and agents. The guidance is hosted on our new look webpages, designed to make it easier for people to navigate and find the resources they need. We'd love to know what you think of the new pages so that we can keep improving the site – please do send us your feedback to [webmaster@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@electoralcommission.org.uk)

[View resources for electoral administrators >](#)  
[View guidance for candidates and agents >](#)

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**The Electoral Commission,**  
3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ  
Tel: 020 7271 0500 Textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500  
[webmaster@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@electoralcommission.org.uk)

**[www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)**  
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