

List of numbered directions for Counting Officers administering the referendum on the UK Parliamentary voting system and the National Assembly for Wales elections (last updated¹ 9 March 2011)

Module 1 – Planning and organisation

The planning process

- 1) Prepare a project plan, keep it under review and use it as a tool to monitor progress. A first draft must be completed and emailed to the [Commission's Wales Office](#) by 28 January 2011.
- 2) Prepare a risk register and keep it under review. A first draft must be completed and emailed to the [Commission's Wales office](#) by 28 January 2011.
- 3) Ensure that you have appropriate resources in place.
 - a) Identify the resources required.
 - b) Take all necessary steps to ensure that the local authority makes the necessary resources available to you to enable you to discharge your functions.

Staffing

- 4) Identify your staffing requirements by 11 February 2011.
- 5) Check that the methods used to identify, recruit and employ staff are robust and comply with legal requirements.
- 6) Form a project team and identify required support staff.
 - a) Put in place deputy arrangements in case you are unable to act in person.
 - b) Any deputies appointed must have the skills and knowledge required to carry out the functions that they have been assigned.
 - c) The written appointment must include details of the functions that the deputy is authorised to exercise on your behalf.
 - d) Assess whether the electoral services team is adequately staffed or whether you will need to recruit any additional staff.
 - e) Identify and ensure staff are available to assist with handling public enquiries.
 - f) Put in place a process for when staff dealing with public enquiries should escalate queries to the electoral services team.

¹ Amendments will be shown in italics.

7) Identify staffing requirements

- a) Identify staffing requirements for polling stations and ensure that, when allocating electors and staff to polling stations, you abide by the Chief Counting Officer's ratios:
 - A polling station must not have more than 2,500 electors allocated to it.
 - In addition to a Presiding Officer, there must be one Poll Clerk for polling stations with up to 750 electors.
 - One additional Poll Clerk must be appointed for polling stations with up to 1,500 electors.
 - One further Poll Clerk must be appointed for polling stations with up to the maximum of 2,500 electors.
 - b) Have a minimum of one polling station inspector for every 15 polling places.
 - c) Identify staffing requirements for your postal vote issuing and opening sessions, taking into account the total number of postal voters and projected turnout of postal voters.
 - d) If you are outsourcing the issue of postal votes, designate a member of the project team to attend those parts of the issuing process you have contracted out to monitor the work of the contractor.
 - e) Identify the number and type of staff you will require to run your verification and referendum count in accordance with the Chief Counting Officer's instructions.
- 8) If you are not also the Electoral Registration Officer, liaise with them and test your method for exchanging data.**

Training and briefing

- 9) **Attend briefing sessions held by the Regional Counting Officer and Chief Counting Officer, and nominate a member of your project team to attend those briefing sessions designated for core electoral staff.**
- 10) **Identify training needs of permanent and temporary staff and plan for training as required.**
 - a) All staff must receive, or have received, training on the legislative requirements and responsibilities relevant to their role, as well as training on ensuring equal access and good customer care.
 - b) Make arrangements for and carry out training for staff as specified in your project plan.

Managing contractors and suppliers

11) Take decisions as to whether to outsource as part of an assessment of costs, risks and benefits. The risks of outsourcing must be clearly identified, with contingency arrangements built into the process.

12) If you decide to outsource any part of the process, ensure that appropriate contractors and suppliers are appointed and that contracts are in place in sufficient time to enable effective service delivery.

- a) Begin the procurement process as soon as possible.
- b) Document all stages of the procurement process.
- c) Notify unsuccessful applicants and be prepared to debrief them should they request it.

13) Remain in control at all times of any outsourced work.

- a) Have a contract in place.
- b) Prepare a clear specification of the work to be outsourced.
- c) Take steps to ensure that the selected contractor understands the requirements and has the experience and suitability to undertake the work being outsourced.
- d) Document all stages of the production process.
- e) Formally document and sign off any variations to the contract.
- f) Advise the contractors of any slippage.

14) Liaise with your Royal Mail account manager on a regular basis.

Venues

15) Undertake an evaluation of the suitability of your polling stations and ensure that you have taken account of accessibility issues.

- a) Where access problems exist, documentary evidence of the action taken to try to remedy these issues must be retained.

16) Identify and book all venues required by 11 February 2011 and ensure contingency arrangements are in place.

- a) Take into account the Chief Counting Officer's key considerations when selecting venues for postal vote issue and opening sessions.
- b) Take into account the Chief Counting Officer's key considerations when selecting a venue for the verification and referendum count.
- c) Prepare a list of alternative venues and have contingency arrangements and emergency protocols in place.
- d) Brief staff on your contingency arrangements.

Maintaining integrity

17) Make contact with your local police Single Point of Contact (SPOC).

- a) Review security arrangements with the local police and consider any risks as part of your contingency planning exercise.

- b) Refer any allegations or suspicions promptly to your SPOC.
- c) Take all necessary steps to ensure police officers attend at polling stations, or call in during polling day, as appropriate, and discuss security issues relevant to any other parts of the process.

Raising awareness

18) Provide public information.

- a) Have in place a written public awareness strategy, covering internal and external communication, and include this in your project plan.
- b) Ensure your strategy contains a clear plan for the effective delivery of information.
- c) Make contact with the communications department at your local authority and seek their input.
- d) Ensure that all outgoing communications provide appropriate contact details to allow anyone to respond and obtain further information.

Module 2 – Administering the polls

Polling station voting

19) Appoint and train all polling station staff and inspectors.

- a) Polling station staff must attend a face-to-face training session.
- b) As a minimum, your polling station staff training session must address the areas covered by the Commission's template PowerPoint presentation.
- c) Ensure that polling station inspectors receive the same training as polling station staff in order that they can be deployed flexibly and carry out polling station duties if required.
- d) Provide an additional briefing for polling station inspectors, covering items that are specific to their role.
- e) Provide all polling station staff and inspectors with a copy of the Commission's polling station handbook and quick guide.
 - e1) *Provide polling station staff with the FAQs issued by the Chief Counting Officer in Circular EC08/2011 and instruct them to use these to respond to any questions on what the referendum is about. Remind polling station staff that there are areas in relation to the referendum where staff are unable to comment and that they must not show any bias (direction inserted 9 March 2011).*
 - e2) *Do not provide polling station staff with copies of any other materials covering the subject matter of the referendum, which includes copies of the Commission's public information booklet (direction inserted 9 March 2011).*
- f) Ensure that all polling station staff and inspectors are given contact numbers for use in the event of any problems.
- g) Provide polling station inspectors with instructions on their role and a checklist of tasks to be carried out.

20) Ensure that you are able to resource polling stations flexibly on the day.

- a) Your plans must be sufficiently flexible to allow you to deploy staff to respond to specific issues that may arise throughout polling day.
- b) Train Poll Clerks and Presiding Officers so that both have the technical knowledge to carry out each other's roles if required.

21) Have in place a process for communicating any necessary amendments to polling station registers and proxy lists as notified by the Electoral Registration Officer.

22) Check and prepare polling station equipment and materials.

- a) Check that all polling station equipment is fit for purpose and that you have a sufficient quantity.
- b) Ensure that any additional equipment identified as required to make the polling station accessible is delivered and set up in good time for the opening of the poll.

- c) Allocate ballot papers to polling stations based on 100% turnout of eligible electorate (i.e. all electors entitled to vote in person at the polling station).
- d) Ensure that the numbers on the ballot papers allocated to each polling station run consecutively in order.
- e) Take all necessary steps to ensure that polling station staff are aware of the circumstances in which tendered ballot papers can be issued.
- f) Ensure the 'Guidance for voters' and 'Instructions for voters' notices are designed and printed using the Chief Counting Officer's templates.
- g) Ensure polling station inspectors carry with them spare equipment and stationery in case of any shortages or missing items.
- h) Prepare a polling station log for polling station staff to record any problems or anomalies.

23) Manage postal votes returned to polling stations.

- a) Provide polling stations with sufficient packets for received postal votes.
- b) The packets must be clearly labelled as containing postal votes and include the name of the polling station and polling station identifier.
- c) Establish processes to provide a clear audit trail and to ensure the security of postal vote packets collected from polling stations during polling day.
- d) Emphasise to Presiding Officers the importance of maintaining the security of postal votes by instructing them to immediately place returned postal votes in the packets provided.

24) Take all necessary steps to ensure that polling stations are laid out in such a way as to take account of voter needs and contribute to the smooth running of the polling station. Consider:

- a) Voter throughput and flow, and how the voter will move through the voting process
- b) The positioning of all of the required furniture and equipment, as well as where all of the notices should be displayed
- c) Placement of signage within the polling station and external signage
- d) The needs of voters with a range of disabilities

Production of ballot papers

25) Produce ballot papers for the referendum in accordance with the Chief Counting Officer's example template and directions for printing.

- a) Print a sufficient number of ballot papers based on 100% turnout of all eligible voters.
- b) Ordinary referendum ballot papers must be printed on light grey paper: there must be a 90% contrast ratio between the black text and the grey background; and therefore the grey background must be a 10% tint of black, or the equivalent.
- c) Tendered referendum ballot papers must be printed on pink paper.

26) Have a process in place for proof-checking ballot papers.

27) Take steps to ensure the security of ballot papers during production and storage.

Poll cards

- 28) Produce combined poll cards using the Chief Counting Officer's example templates.
- 29) Ensure that you have a process in place for proofing and for checking poll cards as they are being printed.
- 30) Identify the delivery method for poll cards and make arrangements accordingly.
 - a) Dispatch your first issue of poll cards by 28 March 2011.

Publication of notices

- 31) Ensure that notices are accessible, including by using the local authority's website, in order to facilitate access to them.

Campaigners and agents

- 32) Brief local referendum agents who have contacted you or who have been appointed for your voting area on local arrangements for the referendum.
- 33) Ensure that all appointed agents are given a copy of the relevant secrecy requirements.
- 34) When determining the maximum number of counting agents, each referendum agent must, as far as possible, be permitted to appoint sufficient numbers to enable full and proper scrutiny of the verification and count processes.

Accredited observers

- 35) In response to enquiries from observers, provide information on the location and timing of electoral processes.

Module 3 – Absent voting

Absent voting timetable

36) If you are not also the Electoral Registration Officer, or if your constituency is not co-terminous, liaise with the Electoral Registration Officer(s) regarding the transfer of absent voting data.

- a) If there is a need for exchanging data electronically, carry out a test of the process ahead of the first scheduled transfer.

Preparing for the absent voting processes

37) Ensure that the absent voting process is fully addressed in your project plan and risk register and that these documents are kept under review.

38) Agree with the Electoral Registration Officer(s) a method for communicating any additions to the list of proxies as a result of the granting of emergency proxy applications.

39) Ensure that polling station staff are trained in order to be able to deal appropriately with proxy voting processes.

40) Make an assessment of the benefits and risks of combining the issue of postal ballot packs, and combine the issue if you consider it viable to do so.

- a) At a minimum, you must consider the impact on the voter, previous practice, supplier capability and IT, staffing and venue requirements.
- b) If you decide not to combine the issue of postal votes, notify the Regional Counting Officer.

41) Plan to check 100% of postal vote identifiers.

42) As far as possible, work to ensure software compatibility with any other local authorities in your constituency.

- a) Liaise with the relevant local authorities as soon as possible and involve all of the relevant software suppliers in the discussions.
- b) Put in place arrangements for transferring and receiving data and agree dates for the exchange of data.
- c) Where a software solution is not possible, agree robust service level agreements (SLAs) to ensure consistent delivery.

43) Ensure that contingency arrangements are in place in order to be able to deal with any last-minute increase in numbers of postal voters, an unexpected increase in turnout, or varying volumes of postal votes returned on different days.

44) Ensure that all staff issuing and opening postal votes receive a briefing on the particular procedures to be followed.

45) Any person undertaking the verification of postal vote identifiers must be provided with a copy of the Commission and Forensic Science Service guidance on signature checking and be instructed to follow this.

46) Plan the layout of your issuing and opening venues.

- a) In the development of your layout plans, include the positioning of teams and equipment needed, and outline the workflows to be followed.
- b) Ensure that the layout is accessible to all those working on the processes and those entitled to observe them.

47) Ensure the effective management of the production of postal vote stationery.

- a) Print the name of your constituency on all 'A' and 'B' envelopes.
- b) Produce the referendum ballot paper in accordance with the example template of the prescribed form and directions for printing issued by the Chief Counting Officer.
- c) Produce a postal voting statement using the Chief Counting Officer's example template.
- d) *Produce a quick start guide for postal voters ~~using the template provided by the Chief Counting Officer~~, and include a copy in every referendum and combined postal ballot pack. (direction amended 18 February 2011)*
- e) If you are outsourcing the production of postal voting stationery, ensure that your software is able to produce a data file that your printers can use to produce the materials to the specification required.
- f) If you are outsourcing the production of postal voting stationery, take all necessary steps to ensure that any electoral registration data held by the contractors is destroyed as soon as possible after polling day, with written undertakings produced for contractors to sign confirming this.

48) Decide on a method of delivering postal ballot packs and ensure that the necessary activities arising out of this decision are taken forward.

- a) If you decide to deliver by hand, plan how this will work in practice. Appoint sufficient staff to be able to deliver postal votes within the same timeframes as would be achieved by delivering using second class post.
- b) If you decide to deliver by post, obtain proof of postage.
- c) If you are using Royal Mail or a commercial delivery firm for issuing postal ballot packs, liaise with them regularly, including to discuss any delivery issues.
- d) Have in place a mechanism for the delivery of postal ballot packs across the whole of the constituency.
- e) Agree a process with your printers that will allow any postal ballot packs that need to be sent overseas to be prioritised.

49) Decide on the number and timing of postal vote issue and opening sessions.

Procedure for issuing and distributing postal votes

- 50) Ensure that all those entitled to attend the issuing process are able to do so.
- 51) The first issue of postal votes must take place by not later than 18 April 2011.
- 52) Where the issue of postal votes has been combined, put in place a system to ensure that electors who are only entitled to vote by post in either the referendum or National Assembly for Wales election are issued with the correct postal ballot pack.
- 53) Prioritise postal votes going overseas and ensure that they are sent out as soon as possible after 5pm on 14 April 2011.
- 54) The first issue of postal votes to electors who have registered under the 11-day rule must take place as soon as possible after they have been added to the register, i.e., as soon as practicable after the publication of the notice of alteration on 26 April 2011.
- 55) Quality-assure the issuing process.
- a) Instruct a member of your staff to carry out regular spot checks during each issuing session.
- 56) If you are not delivering the postal ballot packs by hand, make arrangements for the secure transfer of the postal ballot packs to Royal Mail or a commercial delivery firm.
- 57) Accurately record the number of postal votes issued at the end of each issuing session and when issuing replacement postal ballot packs.
- 58) If you have outsourced the issue of postal votes, ensure that systems are in place to allow you to issue replacements up to 5pm on polling day.
- 59) If you are considering re-issuing to rectify a procedural error, consult the Regional Counting Officer before doing so.

Receiving and opening postal votes

- 60) Liaise with Royal Mail to confirm arrangements for the return of postal votes, and arrange for a final sweep on polling day.
- 61) Maintain a clear audit trail of the receipt and opening of postal ballot packs.
- a) Keep a record of the total number of envelopes received at your office and placed in a postal voters' ballot box, and check this against the number of envelopes counted as part of the opening process.
- b) Keep a record of all of the boxes that have been used for postal votes.
- c) Ensure that all of the figures required for completion of the statement as to postal ballot papers are accurately recorded.
- d) Ensure the security of the contents of the postal voters' ballot box by sealing it and storing it in a secure place until the next scheduled opening of postal votes.

62) Transport postal votes securely to the opening and count venues.

63) Maintain secure storage of postal ballots at all times.

64) Ensure that those entitled to attend opening sessions are able to follow what is happening, where and when.

65) Maintain a robust audit trail of the opening process.

- a) Ensure that you keep an accurate record of the number of postal voting statements rejected by category of rejection.
- b) Prepare a schedule recording the total number of postal votes placed in each postal ballot box, as well as the total number of such boxes.
- c) Complete a postal vote ballot paper account for every postal ballot box.
- d) Batch ballot papers to ensure that you are able to retrieve and cancel any particular ballot paper as required.

Module 4 – Verification and count

Preparing for the verification and count

66) Ensure that the verification and count processes are fully addressed in your project plan and risk register and that these documents are kept under review.

67) Ensure that your verification and counting arrangements can deliver the Chief Counting Officer's principles for an effective verification and referendum count as set out in paragraph 3.6.

a) If you do not propose to use the Chief Counting Officer's count model, make an application to the Regional Counting Officer to follow a different model. Demonstrate how your proposed approach will ensure that your verification and referendum count processes can meet all of the principles specified by the Chief Counting Officer.

68) Appoint and brief all verification and count staff.

- a) Appoint staff as soon as possible.
- b) All briefings must cover the procedures relevant to the role.

69) Prepare your venue layout plans as early as possible.

70) Ensure that all equipment is tested in advance of the verification and count and ensure that sufficient time is allocated for equipment set-up.

- a) Put in place contingency plans in case of an equipment or power malfunction.

71) Ensure that anyone who is entitled to attend has an unrestricted view of the proceedings, while also ensuring that they do not interfere with the work of your staff.

- a) Ensure that everything you do at the verification and count is carried out in clear view of all those entitled to attend.
- b) Those entitled to attend must be admitted whenever they arrive, and any person who wishes to leave and return later must not be prevented from doing so.
- c) Ensure that, as far as possible, each referendum agent is permitted to appoint sufficient numbers of counting agents to enable full and proper scrutiny of the verification and count processes.
- d) Do not limit the number of accredited observers without the approval of the Regional Counting Officer.
- e) If opening postal votes at the verification and count venue, ensure that this happens in full view of the agents and observers present.
- f) Include space and opportunity for the media to report on results.
- g) Take all necessary steps to ensure that anyone attending does not interfere with or compromise the secrecy of the vote.

72) Provide lists of those persons entitled to attend at the entrance to the verification and count, and instruct security staff/door attendants to check the passes of anyone seeking to attend.

- a) Excluding accredited observers and Commission representatives, issue tickets or entrance passes to everyone entitled to attend the count.
- b) Ensure that security staff are briefed that Commission representatives and accredited observers do not need to provide advance notification of where they intend to observe and are entitled to access the venue on production of their Commission-issued identification badge.
- c) For health, safety and security reasons, record the names of everyone who actually attends the verification and count.

73) Provide information to attendees on the processes you are going to follow.

74) Be able to communicate with the Regional Counting Officer.

- a) Ensure that both internal and external communication systems are working and tested.

75) Take all necessary steps to ensure the security of ballot boxes and relevant stationery at all times.

- a) Your method of storage must be such that you can be satisfied that you have taken all the necessary steps to ensure that these are kept securely at all times and cannot be interfered with.
- b) Brief agents about your arrangements, so that they can have confidence that nobody can interfere with the ballot papers and ballot boxes.

Receipt of polling station materials and sealed boxes of postal ballot papers

76) Make clear to the staff receiving the ballot boxes that the ballot boxes and ballot paper accounts must be checked off as they are received.

- a) Staff receiving materials from polling stations must use a checklist to ensure that all ballot boxes and ballot paper accounts are accurately accounted for, as well as any packets containing postal votes handed in at polling stations.
- b) Instruct staff receiving ballot boxes to ensure that they are handed the ballot paper accounts along with the ballot boxes.

77) Ensure that the materials you are legally required to keep sealed are placed in a designated and secure area for the duration of the verification and count.

78) Postal ballot papers that have previously been opened must be brought to the verification and count venue in sealed ballot boxes, with an accompanying ballot paper account for each box.

- a) Staff receiving the postal ballot boxes must use a checklist to ensure that all postal ballot boxes and postal ballot paper accounts are accurately accounted for.

Verification

- 79) Follow the key verification stages set out by the Chief Counting Officer in paragraph 5.8.
- 80) Where separate ballot boxes have been used for each contest, ensure that you have in place a procedure to move transparently any ballot papers which have been placed in the 'wrong' ballot box by electors to the correct ballot box during verification.
- 81) If a ballot paper account does not reconcile, you must undertake the procedure outlined by the Chief Counting Officer in paragraph 5.9, and document the outcome on the verification statement.
- 82) Sign the verification statement to show that you agree with it.

The count

- 83) Ensure that your count processes are transparent and produce an accurate result:
- a) Follow the key stages of the count process as outlined by the Chief Counting Officer.
 - b) Where the total number of votes cast for both outcomes plus the total number of rejected ballot papers does not match the total number of ballot papers given on the verification statement, follow the Chief Counting Officer's procedure in order to try to identify and rectify the discrepancy. Where the figures do not agree after completing this procedure, consult the Regional Counting Officer.
- 84) If you are considering refusing a request for a recount, consult the Regional Counting Officer before doing so.
- 85) Where a recount is to take place, ensure that the referendum and counting agents and any observers in attendance are briefed on the processes you are going to follow:
- a) Carry out the recount in full view of those present.

Module 5 – After the declaration of results

Storage and disposal of documents

86) Seal up and forward the prescribed paperwork to the Electoral Registration Officer as directed:

- a) Liaise with the Electoral Registration Officer at an early stage to agree arrangements for forwarding the documentation.
- b) Maintain a clear audit trail when forwarding the documents.
- c) Ensure that you have systems in place to securely store the sealed packets prior to forwarding them to the Electoral Registration Officer.
- d) Produce labels for each packet, stating what electoral event the packet relates to, the date of the electoral event, how long the packet is to be kept, when it is to be destroyed and, if it is not to be available for public inspection, that fact.
- e) Keep a record of all of the materials that you have a duty to send to the Electoral Registration Officer, and ensure that all of the items are accounted for by recording the number of parcels despatched and the details of the Electoral Registration Officer to whom they have been sent, and by obtaining a receipt from the Electoral Registration Officer.
- f) Provide a copy of the Commission's guidance on the retention and inspection of documents to the Electoral Registration Officer.

Data returns and feedback

87) Accurately complete the statement as to postal ballot papers using the template provided by the Commission.

88) Provide any further data as requested by the Chief Counting Officer by 31 May 2011.