Usability Test Report

Electoral Commission

March 2009

Contents

Executive Summary

The Electoral Commission wished to explore feedback on the user experience of voting and users' responses to the design of ballot papers and associated voting materials. This was to inform the development of good practice guidelines for voter materials used at the polling station and for postal voting.

User Vision and Effortmark conducted structured qualitative usability tests with a range of voters from the 4th to the 12th November 2008.

The 45 participants tested ranged in age from 18 to 67. They lived in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and came from rural, suburban, and urban locations. We included people who were new to voting, occasional voters, and those with considerable voting experience. We also included Welsh speakers and people who speak English as a second language. Participants also varied in educational level, from no qualifications to degrees, and in social demographic.

In a small qualitative study, it is important to focus on the problems that were identified by participants rather than the numbers who found those problems. We found that participants treated the voting tasks seriously, trying their best to vote accurately according to their intentions. They consulted the available guidance materials and instructions at the points where they thought they needed to do so.

Despite this, they also found many plausible (though incorrect) interpretations of the materials that they used.

We found that:

○ Voting experience is important. Participants used their previous knowledge of voting to guide their actions, even if these were wrong. One participant had used an incorrect approach to voting for many years.

○ The type of the electoral system used has a major effect. In England, Wales and Scotland, voters are used to the 'first past the post' voting system, as this is the one which has been most widely used in the past. Although more complex 'proportional representation' voting systems have been used in Scotland and Wales, they are less familiar and more challenging. Even in Northern Ireland, where the Single Transferable Vote system is widely used, we found some lack of understanding of it.

○ The complexity of the postal voting process caused difficulty. Participants had to deal with a ballot paper and postal voting statement, and then place the right item in the right envelope. This offered many different points where misinterpretation was possible.

The Electoral Commission particularly wanted to obtain as much feedback as possible on any details of the design which affect ease of use of the materials being tested. We found that many of these details did not affect the voting process: participants did not notice them while voting, and expressed only mild opinions about the details when questioned later.

In this report, issues are described as high, medium and low priority based solely on their effect on the experience of voting. We have not considered how difficult or easy they may be to act on for legislative or any other reason.

The main **positive findings** include:

○ The use of a diagram of a box with an X in it was liked as an instruction on the ballot paper.

○ Graduated text size on booth posters caught the attention of participants.

○ Logos on the ballot paper meant participants could easily identify their party/candidate.

○ Having spaces between sections of information gained positive feedback.

○ When using first-past-the-post ballots, participants were able to vote confidently according to their intentions.

However, there were a number of usability issues that were noted during the testing, which highlighted a number of problems.

The **highest priority issues** are:

Ballot papers:

○ Participants did not understand why multiple candidates were listed alongside party names for closed list voting (e.g. as used for the European Parliament) and they were unsure if the vote was for the party or for the candidate.

Posters:

○ The instructions clumsily lead the voter through the voting process. Instructions should be given where and when they are needed. E.g. First past the post voting, in some instances you are told outside the booth what type of mark to make, but not inside.

○ Text needs to be kept as minimal and informative as possible on instructions. Providing the voter with too much to read means they are more likely to read little or nothing at all.

Postal voting:

○ The witness instruction for postal voting in Northern Ireland was unclear. Do they witness your vote, or your signature?

○ On the postal voting statement, the instructions were on the back of the page after the signature. Some participants missed them altogether; others misinterpreted them.

○ Textual and illustrative instructions on postal voting did not match up, both in content and numerically. Images used in the illustrated instructions for postal voting did not always resemble what they were illustrating. By having images that are not realistic, this added to the confusion of the postal voting process.

1.   Project background and test objectives

User Vision were commissioned by The Electoral Commission to undertake usability testing of ballot papers and existing election materials, to contribute to the Commission's assessment of the design of voting materials and development of good practice guidelines. User Vision was assisted by Caroline Jarrett of Effortmark, a specialist in the usability of forms.

The test participants were members of the public who were selected to ensure that they meet the profile of the target audiences specified in the brief.

1.1. Voting materials

The testing used materials from elections held in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. These were replicas, made to be as similar as practicable to the actual materials used in recent elections.

The voting materials that we tested included:

○ **Ballot papers**

   The same ballot paper is used whether voting in a polling station or voting by post. The ballot paper is the means by which the voter expresses their choice at an election.

○ **Polling station notices**

   A notice, usually called "guidance for voters", must be displayed inside and outside each polling station. This notice is intended to explain the voting process and we have referred to it as the 'station notice'.

   A separate notice with "information for voting" must be displayed in each polling booth. We have referred to this notice as the 'booth notice'.

○ **Materials for voting by post**

   Postal voters must complete a postal voting statement (by providing their date of birth and signature) and return it along with their ballot paper in order for their vote to be counted. A slightly different system operates in Northern Ireland, where postal voters must complete a 'Declaration of identity' form with their signature and date of birth, in the presence of a witness, who must also provide his or her signature, name and address.

   Postal voting statements and Declarations of identity also include instructions on how to vote by post, and are sometimes accompanied by additional guidance.

   To ensure the secrecy of the ballot, postal voting statements are kept separate from ballot papers. They must both be returned together, but the ballot paper is put in its own envelope (envelope 'A'), which goes into a second envelope (envelope 'B'), along with the postal voting statement.

   The postal voting statement is either issued as a stand-alone document, with envelopes A and B sent with it as separate items, or as a 'one-piece mailer', where envelope A is attached to the bottom of the postal voting statement. This usability test did not include any examples of one-piece mailers.

1.2.   Test Objectives

The findings from this report will be used, together with input which the Commission receives from other interested organisations and individuals, to develop draft good practice guidelines for the design of election materials. This report will also be used to inform the Commission's policy on the use of registered party descriptions.

The key objectives of the testing were to assess:

- How easy/difficult is it to complete various voting tasks?
- Are participants dissatisfied or satisfied with their experience?
- What features of the materials, if any, make it difficult to perform the task?
- How participants viewed party descriptions.

2.   Methodology

We conducted the tests between the 4th and the 12th of November 2008. The tests were carried out in England (London and Cornwall), Wales (Cardiff), Scotland (Edinburgh) and Northern Ireland (Belfast).

2.1.   Usability testing

Usability testing was conducted in one-on-one sessions, requiring individual participants to perform a series of tasks using ballots and voting materials. We tried to mimic the actual voting experience as closely as practicable. As the participants performed these tasks, their progress was recorded through video capture, and the facilitator took notes about their actions and comments. The recordings of all the sessions will be supplied to the Electoral Commission on DVD.

Participants were asked to sign a confidentiality form, giving both their permission to record the session and their agreement to confidentiality of the test subject and details. Participants from London received £50 cash, while all others each received £40 cash.

2.2.   Outline of the test

Each test followed the same outline:

- Brief introduction – **5 mins**
  - Voting and discussing ballot designs – **40 mins**
    - Each participant was asked to declare a voting intention for each election so that we could check afterwards whether their actual vote reflected their voting intention.
    - We gave the participant the appropriate materials for the election, including asking them to read the polling station and booth posters.
    - The participant then voted.
    - We briefly discussed the experience of that particular vote.
    - Participants rated each vote on a four-item questionnaire.
    - We offered a short distraction task between votes.
    - Participants voted in up to 4 elections that varied according to location and their eligibility.
  - Post-test interview, review of alternate designs and questionnaire –**15 mins**
    - We asked participants to compare all the ballots and other materials they had used, and to comment in detail on them. This post-test interview also probed participants' views on the use of party descriptions.

Measures taken during the testing included:

- Whether the voting task had been completed or not.
  a. The voting task was completed with unintended missing results (e.g. under votes);
  b. The voting task was completed but with incorrect results (e.g. over votes or incorrect votes).
- The participants' rating of the difficulty of performing the task.

An example of the testing tasks is listed in *Appendix A*.

Appendix C contains the pre- and post-test interviews and questionnaires.

3.   Task success and participants' opinions of voting

3.1.   Post-test questionnaire

After the testing, participants were asked to complete a brief post-test questionnaire asking them the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with 4 statements about the materials they had just used.

The statements given were:

1. Voting with that ballot was easy.

2. The instructions were clear.

3. The design & layout of the ballot paper was good.

4. I have every confidence that I voted correctly.

The 7 point rating scale used for rating each of the statements and visual elements is shown here:

Fully Agree			Neutral	Disagree Entirely		
3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3

The table below shows the average participant ratings on the scale:

Election type	1. Voting with that ballot was easy	2. The instructions were clear	3. The design & layout of the ballot paper was good	4. I have every confidence that I voted correctly
Polling station voting: One vote (all first past the post elections)	2.4	1.9	1.8	2.2
Polling station voting: As many votes (proportional representation)	2.3	1.8	1.9	2.1
Postal voting (all)	1.3	1.0	0.8	1.1

3.2. Observing their voting

Participants were most confident about, and were more likely to vote correctly, in the simple first-past-the-post elections. All of the ballots in first-past-the-post elections would have been counted, although in a couple of cases participants marked the wrong place on the ballot.

Participants' ratings for the more complex elections were only slightly lower, and there was no significant difference between the two sets of ratings. However, participants did make mistakes in casting their votes in these elections, some of which would have meant the votes would not have been counted, for example:

- Using crosses on a ballot that required preferential numbering (single transferable vote system).

- Marking a second choice for London Mayor but no first choice (supplementary vote system).

- Not using all available votes, even though the intention was to vote fully.

The ratings for postal voting are clearly lower, and this reflected the difficulties that were observed by the test facilitators. Within the postal voting materials, participants were given a postal voting statement or declaration of identity (in Northern Ireland) to complete; accompanying textual instructions and illustrated instructions; a ballot paper or papers; and two envelopes. The completed documents had to be placed into the correct envelopes and sealed. Many participants failed to complete the postal voting task correctly, with the majority of the errors arising from failing to put the items into the correct envelopes. The most typical mistake was placing both the ballot and the postal voting statement in the same envelope.

3.3. Participants and the voting experience

Although we had a wide variety of participants, one of the factors that impacted their voting success was their previous experience of voting.

Participants who were new to voting were more likely to read the materials carefully, but even so made mistakes.

However, some voters with previous experience also made mistakes. These mistakes were made due to participants:

- Paying close attention to the materials, but misinterpreting them.

- Relying on previous experience, and therefore using a familiar voting process rather than the process required for that particular election, as in the example below. In this case, an experienced voter used crosses to mark their preference at an election that was based on the single transferable vote system. This system requires the voter to number candidates in order of preference; this ballot paper would not be counted.

4.   Test findings

From this analysis, we identified usability issues: where participants tried to vote according to their intentions, but some aspect of the materials caused them to make a mistake.

We did not observe any 'careless errors'. Participants treated the voting process seriously and tried their best to vote accurately. Each difficulty arose from a plausible, but incorrect, interpretation.
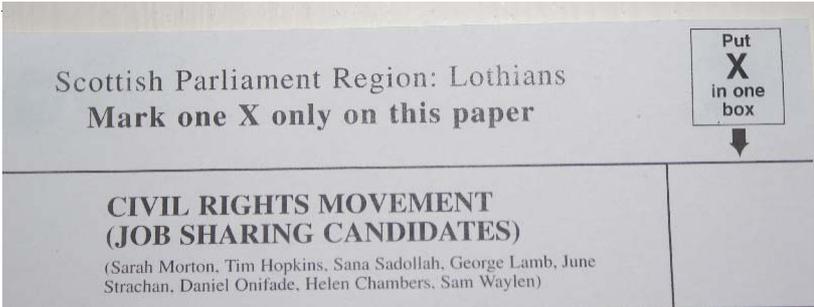
To help give a sense of the relative importance of the issues, we have classified them according to the categories in the table below.

Category	Definition
P	Positive finding - this approach is recommendable and should be preserved.
H	High - these are considered high severity issues which caused participants to make errors when voting or when dealing with other parts of the voting materials.
M	Medium - these are considered medium severity issues. They did impede the voting task, but not to the same extent as high priority issues.
L	Low - these are considered low severity issues that participants were able to overcome but are still worth attention.
O	Observed issue - usability or accessibility issue noted by the facilitator but not mentioned by any of the participants in the tests.

4.1. Content

This section looks at the content of the materials. Readability of election materials is important; they must speak directly to the voter, and address their needs. The content should be clear and understandable to help the voter cast their vote with ease. This section includes topics such as:

- Instructions
- Title of ballot and posters
- Party/candidate/ option info/addresses
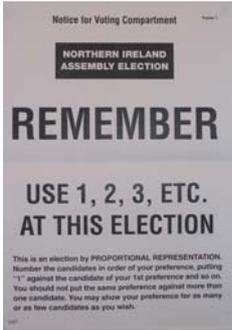- Numbering of lists
- Inclusion of logos

Item	Description	Severity
Ballot papers		
4.1.1.	**People liked having a box with an X in it above the corresponding column.** For example, participants liked the instructions on the regional Scottish parliamentary ballot paper. Due to the diagram's location, the column for voting was clearly identified. It also clearly defined what type of mark to put in the box. This is also a help for voters who have difficulty reading. Scottish Parliament Region: Lothians **Mark one X only on this paper** Put **X** in one box ↓ **CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT (JOB SHARING CANDIDATES)** (Sarah Morton, Tim Hopkins, Sana Sadollah, George Lamb, June Strachan, Daniel Onifade, Helen Chambers, Sam Waylen)	P
4.1.2.	**Participants liked having logos on the ballot papers.** Logos helped participants identify parties easily. Some participants said that they used the logos to help them find the party they wanted to vote for.	P
4.1.3.	**Having more than one vote on a ballot paper was confusing**. In Great Britain, participants' general concept of voting was one vote for one candidate. Participants had difficulty with casting more than one vote at one time. ○ In the London Mayor election, which uses the supplementary vote system, the voter can indicate a first and a second choice. 　• *"Can I vote twice for Boris?"* 　• *"Do I have to vote for someone else?"* ○ In a Welsh Local Election which was a multi-member first past the post election to elect 3 candidates (also used in England) 　• *"Why do I have so many votes?"* ○ In a Scottish Local Election, which uses the single transferable vote system 　• *"Why would I vote for more than one?"* **Recommendation**: Any election with more than one vote needs extra explanation – but still requires a balance between the need for explanation and the need to keep written information to a minimum. If the voter has more than one vote, ensure that the ballot paper and the booth instructions clearly state: ○ How many votes the voter has. ○ Whether the voter must use all the votes and whether they can vote more than once for a person (see also **point 4.1.20**). ○ What type of mark to use - cross(es) or numbering of preferences.	H

4.1.4.	**Candidates who did not have logos on the ballot paper were seen as inferior**. Independent candidates are not permitted to use a logo on the ballot paper. Participants saw these candidates as being "inferior", and said they would be unlikely to vote for them as they didn't seem "official enough".	H

In Northern Ireland:

Below is an example of where a participant did not vote for the independent candidate, interpreting the lack of a logo as an indication that they were not 'official'.
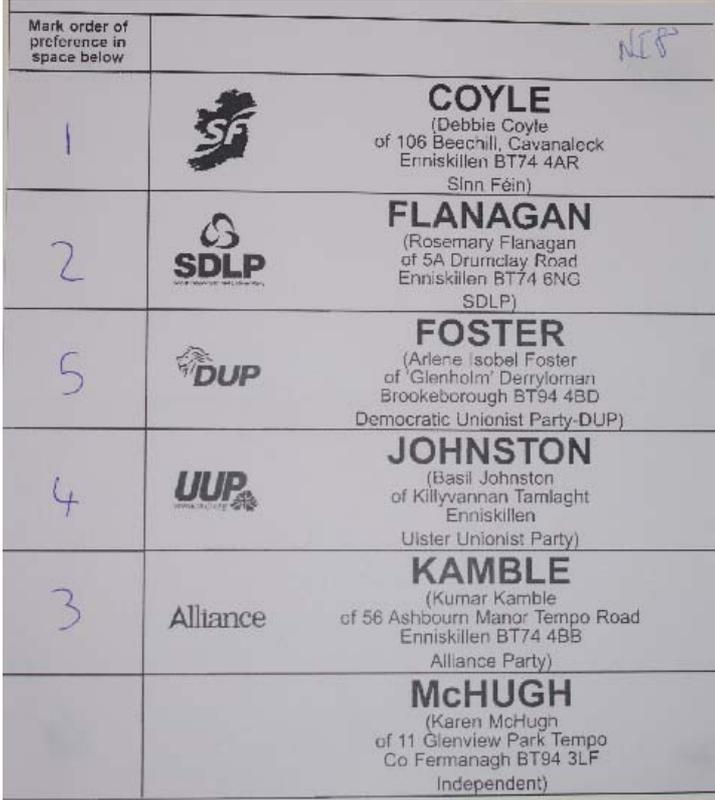
Recommendation: If there is no logo, put the name of the party or 'independent' where the logo would be.

4.1.5.	**Some first past the post voting elections had no instructions on either the ballot paper or booth poster instructions of what type of mark to use.** The only instruction of what mark to make is on the station notice. Once the voter is in the booth, there is nothing to tell them **how** to vote. Instructions include *'Vote for one candidate only'*, *'You have one vote'*, and *'Vote for one candidate only, put no other mark'*. There is no instruction as to how to vote.	M

Recommendation: Make sure that the booth notice and the ballot paper tells voters exactly how to vote. As with **point 4.1.1**, use the instruction which not only indicates the column to vote in, but also shows what mark to make.

4.1.6.	**Having the candidates address on ballot papers was disliked**. There were 3 main viewpoints here. Addresses were seen as: 1. not necessary, 2. potentially dangerous for the candidate, especially in London and Northern Ireland, 3. a way to sway floating voters. In addition, addresses provide more text for voters to read, giving the voter more to think about and increasing the cognitive load. **Recommendation**: Remove addresses from ballot papers. Keeping it simple with less text will mean the ballot is clearer, and make it easier to read and vote.	M
4.1.7.	**Numbering parties or candidates on the ballot paper was not liked.** Numbering on the ballot was seen as unhelpful, irrelevant, and a cause of possible error by participants circling the number instead of marking the box. When voting for one party/candidate only, some participants (especially new voters) had to recheck instructions as they were unsure whether to circle the number next to the party/candidate, or use the box. Numbering of individual candidates on ballot papers which used party lists was also seen as unhelpful. Participants did not know why European Parliament candidates were numbered **Recommendation**: ○ Don't number candidates. This will mean more white space on the page, which participants thought was a good idea. It will also reduce the cognitive load on the voter, allow them to make their choice easier, and avoid the potential of misleading them. ○ This could be further enhanced by adopting the example of having a diagram showing an X above the column as seen in **point 4.1.1**.	M
4.1.8.	**Lack of titles on ballot papers and posters is unhelpful.** Participants expressed concern that titles were omitted from some ballot papers, especially if there was more than one ballot paper to complete. Some participants said depending on where they were voting, they would not notice the posters unless they had a clear title. E.g. at a school, school posters may be on display, and the station notices may not stand out. **Recommendation:** Provide election titles on all ballot papers and corresponding material to ensure that voters know the election they are voting in. This will also ensure posters can be identified easily.	M

4.1.9.	**If parties were listed alphabetically on ballot papers, this highlighted inconsistencies in party names**	L

The position of a particular party on ballot papers which list parties alphabetically can vary between elections, depending on the name/description used (a political party may register up to 12 party descriptions, and may then use any one of these descriptions or the registered party name on the ballot paper). This resulted in participants taking longer to locate their chosen party if it was not listed in the order they would expect.

For example, these different descriptions were used by the Conservative party on the materials we looked at:

- Conservatives
- Conservative Party
- Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party
- The Conservative Party
- Welsh Conservatives
- Welsh Conservative party

And the different descriptions used by the Labour party included:

- Labour Party
- Scottish Labour Party
- The Labour Party
- The Scottish Labour Party

Recommendation: Have consistency with party names to make them easier to read, more recognisable and quicker to find.

Posters

4.1.10.	**POSTERS (BOOTH) - Having 'REMEMBER' in large letters on some booth posters had a positive impact.** In Northern Ireland, 'REMEMBER' in big letters at the top of the booth posters got people's attention: it drew them into reading the rest of the poster.	P

| 4.1.11. | **POSTERS - Ambiguous instructions on the booth and station notices to 'vote for a party or an individual' caused difficulty.** For example, in the European Parliament election, parties and candidates are listed. The instruction to 'vote for a party or an individual' can be misinterpreted to mean "vote for an individual within a party". | H |

In Cornwall:

A participant put a cross next to the candidate name thinking that she had to choose a candidate:

Recommendation:

○ Explain that you can vote for either a party or an independent candidate.

○ This could be further enhanced by adopting the example of having a diagram showing an X above the column as seen in **point 4.1.1**.

| 4.1.12. | **POSTERS - The information on posters was not always provided in the appropriate place**. Participants looked at the booth poster when they needed help in voting. At this point, they had ignored or forgotten information that was presented on the polling station poster. | O (H) |

Recommendation:

○ Split the instructions up to represent the stages of the journey the voter takes when voting. What the participant has to know before they enter the booth, tell them before they enter the booth.

○ The information they need in the booth (i.e. how to vote, spoilt vote), tell them in the booth.

○ The information they need once voted, tell them once they've voted (fold/don't fold, show to member of staff etc).

○ Never assume key information will be remembered from one stage to another.

4.1.13.	**POSTERS (STATION) - The titles of some of posters were considered off-putting.** Participants thought this poster was off-putting for any voter.	M

- The use of the word 'directions' was considered to fit with the context of travel, not voting.
- The length of the title was considered too long.
- The use of underlining was seen as unnecessary.

Recommendation: Ensure titles of posters are short, concise, and to the point. Participants liked 'Guidance for Voters'. When asked, they also preferred the word 'guidance' over 'help' or 'assistance'.

4.1.14.	**POSTERS - The amount of text instructing voters was considered too much on some posters.** Large amounts of text in a small font are more likely to result in the voter not reading the poster.	M

- In Scotland, local elections booth posters made mention of how **not** to vote.
- Instructions are repeated on posters resulting in duplicated text, therefore more for the voter to read.
- Most of the participants had forgotten about showing their ballot paper to a presiding officer by the time they had completed voting.

Recommendation: Keep text as minimal and informative as possible on instructions. Create headings to split the information up. E.g. before you vote, how to vote, after you vote. This could all be on the same poster using highlighting and low lighting to follow the voter's journey, or could be created as 3 separate posters that also follow the voter's journey.

- Do not make any reference on how not to vote. Scottish instructions said 'instead of using a cross'. Anyone who skims the instruction could notice 'a cross' and use the incorrect method to vote.
- Do not duplicate instructions on the same poster. This was particular to instructions about spoilt voting.
- The poster could be created as 3 separate posters that follow the voter's journey with these titles.
- Alternatively, the stages could be highlighted and low lighted to follow the voter's journey.

4.1.15.	**POSTERS (STATION) - Instructions on the notices for folding the paper were overlooked**. Various mistakes were made as the instructions are not clear enough, and not in the right place. They were on the station notice rather than on the booth notice. Examples of errors included: ○ Folding the ballot paper into quarters (a common mistake) or sixths (one participant) when it should have just been folded in half. ○ Folding a ballot paper when it should have been left flat. **Recommendation**: Make clear on the booth notice whether or not the paper needs to be folded. Include a diagram that shows the correct method of folding.	M
4.1.16.	**POSTERS (BOOTH) - On one of the notices, instructions for entering the booth were provided at the wrong place.** Voters are told to '*go to the compartment*' on a booth notice. By this time, they are in the booth/compartment. One participant thought this instruction was telling them to go somewhere else to vote as they did not associate the term 'compartment' with voting. (see **point 4.1.19**) **Recommendation:** Remove 'go to the compartment' from the booth instruction. As before, split the instructions up to represent the stages of the journey the voter takes when voting. Provide the instructions to the relevant stage they are at. E.g. on the ballot box (see **point 4.1.12**).	L
4.1.17.	**POSTERS (STATION) - Instructions about showing the back of the ballot paper to the presiding officer need to be improved**. The instructions said '*Show the back of the paper to the presiding officer, so as to disclose the number and official mark.....*' This was missed in most instances. This instruction was given on the station notice only and so was often forgotten by the time the participant had completed their ballot paper. **Recommendation**: Consider removing the instruction if it is not necessary. Otherwise, ensure that the information the voter needs for each stage is split up to represent the stages of the journey the voter takes when voting. (See **point 4.1.12**)	L
4.1.18.	**POSTERS - Instructions on booth or station notices to leave the polling station immediately are unnecessary.** All participants when asked thought this was unnecessary. **Recommendation:** In order to cut down on the amount of instruction the voter has to digest, this is not a step that needs to be pointed out to the voter.	L

4.1.19.	**POSTERS - The voting instructions on posters use terminology that is unfamiliar.** In particular:	**L**
	⭕ Compartments: participants were unsure what this meant. Once the poster was discussed they realised that compartments were 'booths' as they know them. Not only is booth a shorter word but it is also how it is commonly known.	
	⭕ Presiding officer: the word 'officer' helped participants to understand the unfamiliar word 'presiding', but it is not clear why the word 'presiding' is necessary. Participants guessed that this meant 'staff' or 'official'. On Scottish local election materials, station notices refer to staff, whereas the booth instructions refer to both presiding officers and staff.	
	⭕ Spoil: participants knew what this meant, but when prompted, said it's not a word they would use to describe making a mistake.	
	Recommendation: Use more recognisable language. Compartments are "booths". Spoil is "make a mistake". Presiding officers are "staff".	

4.1.20.

POSTERS - Instructions on some posters caused under-votes or over-votes. In Northern Ireland and Scotland, participants were asked to vote in Single Transferable Vote elections. They needed to indicate their preferences and could opt for any number of preferences between 1 and the full number of candidates available.

The posters failed to convey this accurately. Participants interpreted the instructions as either:

- You must indicate every preference (which may be over-voting).

- You may only indicate your first three (Northern Ireland) or four (Scotland) preferences (which may be under-voting).

No votes were spoiled, so this is a low priority issue.

For example, in Northern Ireland, booth posters said 'use 1,2,3, etc.' as seen below:

USE 1, 2, 3, ETC.
AT THIS ELECTION

The 'ETC' at the end made some participants' think that they were required to use all possible votes. The person who completed the ballot paper below used all available votes. When asked retrospectively why they did this, the participant said this was how they had interpreted the instructions.

In Scotland, booth instructions for the voter said to:

'Put the number 1 in the box next to the name of the candidate who is your first choice, 2 in the box next to your second choice, 3 in the box next to your third choice, 4 in the box next to your forth choice and so on. You can mark as many choices as you like'.

Some participants marked up to 4 choices. When asked about this, although they recognised that they could vote for as many as they wanted, they were more inclined to vote for 4 due to the instructions.

Recommendation: Include more explicit advice in the poster to make it clear that you can indicate as few or as many preferences as you wish.

L

4.1.21.	**POSTERS - English & Welsh translations on the instructions were not exactly the same.** In Wales, when asked, participants said although the translation of English to Welsh was similar, it was not a total match. **Recommendation**: Ensure any translations are as close as possible so they do not undermine the confidence of the voter in the election process.	L

4.2. Layout

Whereas the previous sections addressed content, this one focuses on layout. Good layout on any document including ballot papers will improve how well the reader understands the structure and what they are supposed to do. This section includes topics such as:

- Positioning of instructions/information
- Logo boxes
- Use of space
- Size of paper
- Use and positioning of columns
- Separating ballots and instructions
- Order of parties/candidates/choices
- Text justification

Item	Description	Severity
Ballot papers		
4.2.1.	**Positioning of the voting column was not important.** No participant commented on the position of the column. When prompted, some participants thought the boxes should be on the right hand side, as people read left to right, and their last action would be to mark their preference after having read along the line.	P
4.2.2.	**On the ballot papers, left- or central-alignment of text did not make a difference when voting.** Only when prompted did participants express a preference, and then the results were mixed. In closed list voting, (where candidates names are listed underneath the parties standing in the election) there was a slight preference for party name to be centred, with candidates names left aligned, but not numbered.	P
4.2.3.	**The size of paper was not commented on until prompted.** Participants did not initially comment on the size of paper. Once prompted, they thought the size (A3) of the booth and station notices was good. Participants thought the size of the ballot paper should be dictated by the number of candidates or parties standing in the particular election, although excessively long ballots would be off-putting.	P

| 4.2.4. | **Boxed logos were disliked**. On this ballot paper, the logos were boxed. This meant that there was an empty box next to the independent candidates. Although there were no wrong votes here, participants recognised there is the potential risk of voting incorrectly here by putting your choice in the empty logo box. | M |

Lack of a logo makes this look like a box to vote in

Recommendation: Do not use a line to separate the logos from the candidate details. Put them all together within the same box. Adopting the example of the X above the column in **point 4.1.1** could further improve this.

4.2.5.	**Party names are important in helping people find their choice, but are sometimes hard to find.** Party names were not always instantly recognisable or prominent. The majority of participants said they identify their choice by party name or logo first. In particular this affected new voters who were not as familiar with party logos. They had to read the ballot paper closely to identify their choice. On this example, from Northern Ireland, party names were in brackets also containing the candidates address.	M

> **McCANN**
> (Eamonn McCann of 13 Westland Avenue, Derry, BT48 9JE
> Socialist Environmental Alliance)
>
> **MORGAN**
> (Martin Morgan of 45 Somerton Park, Belfast, BT15 4DP
> SDLP)

Recommendation: Ensure the party name has a line to itself, and is a larger text size than the address. It should not be mixed up with other information. Abbreviated party names should also be expanded for new voters. E.g. Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP). Ideally, the address should be removed. (See **point 4.1.6**)

4.2.6.	**Voters did not understand why they had more than one ballot paper to vote for the same body/assembly**. For example, when voting in elections for the Greater London Assembly, Scottish Parliament & National Assembly for Wales, voters receive two ballot papers. A majority of participants were unsure why this was the case. Despite this, most also said they preferred to have separate ballot papers for each vote, and not one combined ballot paper. **Recommendation**: Keep separate ballots on separate papers, but highlight the differences within the title. Ensure that the instructions explain why there are two ballot papers.	L

4.2.7.	**There were inconsistencies in the layout of candidate's names**. There were numerous ways candidate's names were displayed, for example:	L

1. Brown
   Arthur

2. Brown
   Arthur Brown

3. Brown, Arthur

When prompted, participants found

- The 1st example difficult to read
- The 2nd and 3rd examples were easier to read.

Recommendation: Use example 2 or 3 for layout. Specific testing could be done to find which is best. In general, the first layout should be avoided.

4.2.8.	**Writing multiple candidate names in sentence style made the list harder to read.** When multiple candidate names were in sentence style, as in this example, it was difficult to read: Sarah Morton, Tim Hopkins, Sana Sadollah, George Lamb, June Strachan, Daniel Onifade, Helen Chambers, Sam Waylen When displayed in a list style participants found it easier to read the names. Sarah Morton Tim Hopkins Sana Sadollah George Lamb June Strachan Daniel Onifade Helen Chambers Sam Waylen Although the list style is easier to read than sentence style, it was also associated with the error of trying to vote for an individual candidate within a party list. (See **point 4.1.11**) **Recommendation**: Do further testing to establish whether correcting the instructions for these ballot papers (as recommended in **point 4.1.11**) helps to avoid the error of voting for a candidate rather than a party. If so, display candidate names in a list style.	L

Posters

4.2.9.	**POSTERS (BOOTH) - Graduating text size is good.** Participants liked the graduated text on the Northern Ireland booth posters. They felt it drew them in and looked easier to read. 	P

4.2.10.	**POSTERS - Shorter paragraphs will make instructions easier to read and increase the chance that it will be read.** Splitting up points with white space meant participants found the information easier to read.	P

In Northern Ireland:

This poster on the left was particularly liked for the use of white space between bullet points.

Participants thought the poster on the right looked more difficult to read due to the lack of space between paragraphs and the length of the points.
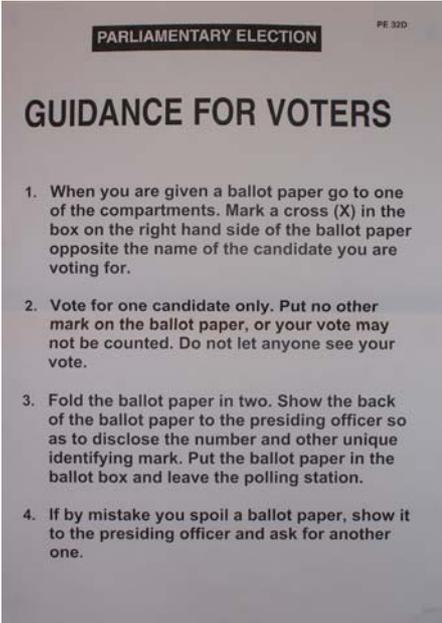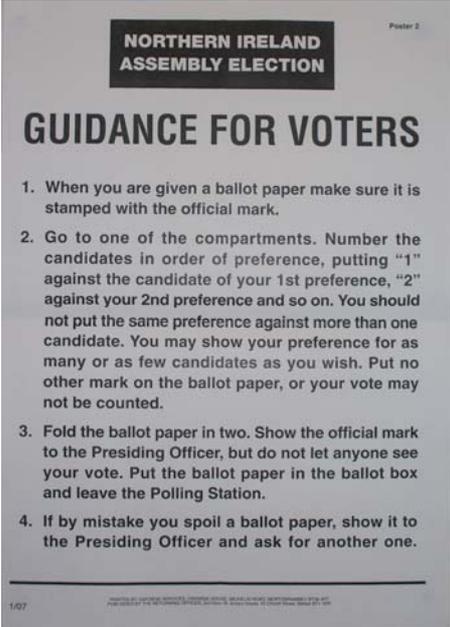
4.2.11.	**POSTERS - The idea of having Welsh/English instructions on separate pieces of paper was not liked**. Participants would not like to see English and Welsh instructions on separate notices as they saw this as being wasteful with paper.	P

4.2.12.	**POSTERS - Poor layout of text means instructions are difficult to read**.	**M**

In these examples, the first one has the key instructions starting on a new line and aligned to the left. Participants found this much easier to read than the second one, where the instructions start at the end of the lines, on the right.

Good example: look at the placement of the "1" & "2"

> 2. **Go to one of the compartments. Number the candidates in order of preference, putting "1" against the candidate of your 1st preference, "2" against your 2nd preference and so on. You**

Bad example: look at the placement of the "1" & "2"

> 2. **Go to one of the compartments. Number the candidates in order of preference, putting "1" against the candidate of your 1st preference, "2" against your 2nd preference and so on. You should**

Recommendation: split the instructions logically. Have each instruction as a separate point which starts left aligned.

4.2.13.	**POSTERS - Language presentation was inconsistent on bilingual posters throughout Wales.** Some posters had English on the left, Welsh on the right or vice versa, others had English above and Welsh below, or vice versa.	**L**

Recommendation: Build up familiarity and ease of use by displaying information consistently throughout all elections.

4.3. Appearance

Whereas the previous sections addressed layout, this one focuses on appearance, the look and feel of the materials. The visual appearance of the election materials should be neat and organized to ensure the voter can vote easily. This section includes topics such as:

- Paper
- Colour
- Font
- Size of boxes & logos
- Text/background contrast
- Shading (highlighting)

Item	Description	Severity
Ballot papers		
4.3.1.	**The idea of using coloured logos on ballot papers had mixed results initially, but the overriding feeling was not to use colour.** All of the ballot papers we used in the testing were printed in black ink, including the logos. Until prompted, participants did not mention the use of colour for logos on ballot papers. The majority then stated they would like the use of colour, however, the overall strength of the feeling behind the added cost over ruled this.	P
4.3.2.	**Participants liked the appearance of full boxes for voting on some ballot papers.** For example this was used in the Greater London Authority elections. Participants thought it was very clear where they had to place their vote. However, some did think the distance between the party name and the box was excessive, meaning they had to scan across the page with their finger to ensure they had selected the correct box. This could be easily rectified by having the line all the way from under the logo to under the choice box. 	P
4.3.3.	**Poor quality paper can reflect badly on the voting process.** These materials for the testing were produced at short notice, but were as close a reproduction of the actual materials as was practical. Some participants thought some of the paper was a bit flimsy and some materials looked home produced resulting in the participant dismissing the ballot. **Recommendation**: Give ballots a minimum paper quality.	M

4.3.4.	**Candidates' names were shown inconsistently, even within materials for a given election**. There was a huge variation on how the text for candidates' names was displayed. Sometimes it was ALL CAPS, sometimes it was not, sometimes it was **all bold**, sometimes it was not, and sometimes it was on one line, and sometimes on 2 lines. (See **point 4.2.7**) **Recommendation**: Consistency is the key: ensure that candidates' names are shown in the same way in all the types of voting materials. Do not split candidates' names over two lines.	O (M)
4.3.5.	**Reverse text (light text on a black background) is easy to miss.** For example, the London ballots all had instructions in reverse text, as in this example: Vote once (X) in one blank box These were overlooked by some participants. This result is consistent with other usability tests, where we have observed that participants frequently fail to absorb information printed in light text on dark background when the rest of the material is printed as dark text on a light background. **Recommendation:** Do not use reverse text.	M
4.3.6.	**Using coloured ballot papers had mixed results**. Participants liked the colour coding of ballots, however, in London, no one knew how to describe the peach colour. In Wales, one participant dismissed the orange ballot paper, thinking it was some kind of flyer. Brash/bright colours could be dismissed as flyers. **Recommendation**: Only use colours that are easy to distinguish, especially if instructions are colour matching. Use light colours and ensure any colour that is used has a good contrast for text on it. Also ensure provisions are made for people with visual impairment.	L
4.3.7.	**The use of highlighting and low-lighting information was the opposite way round.** On the ballot papers used in the Greater London Authority elections: the title is in reverse colour order. E.g. '**Election** for the Mayor '. **Recommendation:** Reverse the colours. Voters know they are at an election, what they need to know is which election it is they are voting in. 'Election **for the Mayor**'.	O (L)

4.3.8.	**Having a strengthened black line to highlight the voting box was not liked.** Participants thought this was too harsh visually.	L

	Recommendation: Rather than using a heavy line to highlight the correct voting box, use recommendation as described in **point 4.1.1**.	

| 4.3.9. | **Lots of minor details about the appearance of ballot papers don't really matter**. Participants never provided any information about the minor details until probed. E.g.

○ Sans serif font was favoured over serif font (but not by much, and not strongly)

○ The positioning of columns isn't that important (see **point 4.2.1**)

When we asked them about these details, participants generally preferred whichever detail was most familiar to them.

Recommendation: Again, consistency is key. The smaller details do not require as much attention; just ensure they are consistent across all the elections and from election to election. | L |
|---|---|---|

Posters

4.3.10.	**POSTERS - Small text is harder to read for all participants**. In particular this will make it more difficult for voters with any eyesight problem, or older people. On this particular poster, not only was the text small, but there was too much of it. **Recommendation**: Ensure the text is clear, large, and concisely presented to take up less space. Ensure white space is used effectively as previously highlighted. (See **point 4.2.10**)	M

4.4. Postal voting

The postal voting materials we tested were all of the type where two envelopes are provided: an A envelope for the ballot paper or papers, and an outer B envelope to hold the A envelope and an accompanying postal voting statement (England, Wales or Scotland) or declaration of identity (Northern Ireland).

Some authorities use a self-mailer style instead of the outer B envelope: these were not available for this testing.

When postal voting, the voter has to:

- ⭕ Find the ballot paper(s)
- ⭕ Record his or her vote on the ballot paper(s)
- ⭕ Place the ballot paper(s) inside the A envelope
- ⭕ Fill in the postal voting statement. In Northern Ireland, this is a declaration of identity and must also be completed by a witness
- ⭕ Place the postal voting statement or declaration of identity and the A envelope inside the B envelope.

The voting materials also included instructions: in some cases, on the reverse of the other materials and in others as a separate piece of paper.

Item	Description	Severity
4.4.1.	**There was general confusion with the sets of postal voting materials issued, as participants turned bits of paper back and forth numerous times.** In Northern Ireland: Instructions were provided to the voter to assist with the process. Textual instructions were on the back of the declaration of identity (the part that the voter has to sign, and the witness has to complete), and the illustrated instructions were on a separate bit of paper. The voter has to complete the declaration of identity, get it witnessed, and return it along with their ballot papers. In Scotland: On the materials we tested, the instructions for postal voting were printed on both sides of the paper, separate from the postal voting statement, (the part that the voter has to sign). Participants tended to use the instructions they received face up, and often completely missed the instructions on the other side of the paper. In general: There was a lot of turning paper back and forth to find and read instructions. This was further complicated in some examples where the numbers or letters used for the textual and illustrated instructions were not the same. **Recommendation:** Write the instructions so that each instruction comes at the point that it is needed: 1. Instructions about voting on the ballot paper. 2. Instructions about putting the ballot paper into the A envelope should be on the A envelope. 3. Instructions on how to complete the postal voting statement or declaration of identity should be placed next to the boxes that the voter has to fill in. 4. Instructions about what to do with the postal voting statement or declaration of identity after completion should be placed immediately after the signature. Do not have instructions on the back of a piece of paper that say what to do with	O (H)

	the front of the same page.		
4.4.2.	**The witness instruction on the declaration of identity in Northern Ireland was unclear.**	H
	○ 2 participants missed the fact they had to have a witness to sign the declaration of identity.	
	○ 1 participant was confused as to whether the witness had to witness the actual vote, i.e. completing the ballot paper.	
	○ 1 participant noticed the instructions refer to the witness as 'he'. This prompted the comment *"Does that mean it has to be a man?"*	
	Recommendation: Revise the witness instructions to ensure that:	
	○ It is clear that the role of the witness is to watch the voter sign the statement, not the actual vote;	
	○ Instructions are gender neutral.	
4.4.3.	**The action of providing a signature should come at the end of the process.** The postal voting statements had the signature box on the front and important instructions on the back. However, there is an important convention in forms that the signature indicates the final task on the form. Having signed, participants thought they were finished and failed to turn over to see the instructions on the back. This meant that some of them failed to complete the correct sequence of inserting items in the envelopes.	H
	Recommendation: Have the signature as the last part of the postal vote, and have the instructions for it after the voting instructions. Ensure instructions are provided before actions.	
4.4.4.	**There were different numbers of steps in different sets of instructions for the same task.** In some materials, instructions were given in 2 formats, textual and illustrated. One example had textual instructions with points 1 to 11, whereas the illustrated instructions had points 1 to 5.	H
	By giving different numbered items, participants thought the instructions must be about different things.	
	Recommendation: Again, consistency is the key. If a participant does not understand point 3 fully in the textual instructions, they should be able to look at point 3 on the illustrated instructions to see if this provides further help. They should not have to work out which point matches which across the two sets of instructions.	
4.4.5.	**The content of textual instructions and illustrated instructions didn't match.** For example, in Northern Ireland, guidance on spoilt voting was only on the textual instructions and not the illustrated ones. One participant did not notice the textual instructions as they were on the back of the declaration of identity, and so could find no instruction as to what to do with a spoilt vote.	H
	Recommendation: Ensure the same message is given on both textual and illustrated instructions.	
4.4.6.	**Separate instructions for the same thing were listed by both numbers and letters.**	M
	In the materials we tested in Scotland:	
	○ Textual instructions used 1, 2, 3 etc for guideline points.	
	○ Illustrated instructions used a, b, c etc.	

Participants thought they must be instructions for different things.

Recommendation: Provide consistency in the way instructions are listed. Numbers were preferred as the participants had an immediate answer to the number of steps they had to carry out.

4.4.7.	**Using unrealistic images on instructions can impede voting.** For example, on one set of instructions (in Northern Ireland), a ballot paper had been illustrated using this image:	M

Unfortunately, none of the participants who used these materials recognised the image as a representation of a ballot paper, thus leading to confusion.

Recommendation: Ensure any graphical representation is a true representation of what it is supposed to be illustrating.

4.4.8.	**On bilingual materials, having languages intermixed was difficult on the eye.**	M

In Wales, the postal voting statement was particularly difficult to read, and some participants (who did not read/speak Welsh) saw the first part in Welsh so dismissed the whole thing.

Etholiad i Gynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru – Dydd Iau 3 Mai 2007
Election to the National Assembly for Wales – Thursday 3 May 2007
Datganiad Pleidleisio drwy'r Post / Postal Voting Statement

Rhif y Papurau Pleidleisio / Ballot Paper Numbers 00001 & 00001

Deddfau Cynrychiolaeth y Bobl / Representation of the People Acts

GWELER YR WYBODAETH BWYSIG DROSODD / SEE IMPORTANT INFORMATION OVERLEAF

There was no strong preference in Wales as to which language should go first, although Welsh first had a slight preference.

Recommendation:

○ Do not intermix languages

○ Where possible, place the two languages side by side.

If placing the two languages side by side is impractical, then put Welsh first.

4.4.9.	**The signature box was too faint in comparison to the date of birth box.** In this example from Scotland, the boxes for the date of birth were much darker than the signature box, meaning participants were unsure where to sign. **Date of birth:** Using the format 09 06 1970 enter your date of birth in the boxes provided. eg: if your date of birth is 9 June 1970 write `0 9 0 6 1 9 7 0` **Signature:** Sign in the box provided, using your usual signature. IMPORTANT: Keep signature within the grey border. Please write in **BLACK INK**. **You must provide your signature and date of birth. If you do not, the postal voting statement will be invalid and your vote will not be counted.** **Remember - Electoral Fraud is a crime.** D D M M Y Y Y Y (with 1 9 filled in) **Recommendation:** Ensure it is obvious to the participant where to sign. Have the date of birth boxes in the same shading as the signature box.	L
4.4.10.	**The signature box needs a wider border.** The instructions state that it is important to 'keep signature within the grey border'. We assume that this box will be processed by some sort of automated technology (e.g. Optical Character Recognition). The box used on the postal voting statement here does not provide much in the way of a buffer. **Recommendation:** Make the box more suitable for automatic processing by including a smaller white box within a larger pale grey box, like this:	O (L)
4.4.11.	**There is unfamiliar terminology used within voting instructions.** For example, in Northern Ireland, the text instructions to the voter say 'You should place the figure 1 opposite the name....'. Some participants pointed out that 'figure 1' normally refers to a diagram, especially when the voter has recent experience of formal education, and is, therefore, familiar with the terminology from text books. **Recommendation**: Use more recognisable language. Ensure numbers are referred to as numbers, not as figures.	L
4.4.12.	**Generic instructions against specific tasks caused confusion.** In materials tested in Wales, participants noticed on the instruction on 'How to vote by post', there were ambiguous references to 'ballot paper[s]', 'name[s]', and 'candidate[s]'. This meant that voters had to decide for themselves whether in the particular election they should be looking for one or more ballot papers, one or more names, and one or more candidates. **Recommendation:** Provide specific instructions for specific tasks – refer to one ballot paper, name or candidate, or more than one, as appropriate.	L

4.5. Party descriptions

A political party may register up to 12 party descriptions, and may then use any one of these descriptions on the ballot paper. On some of the papers we used, some parties had used a party description rather than their registered name.

Item	Description	Severity
4.5.1.	**Party descriptions were disliked by many voters.** Participants did not notice or comment on the party descriptions until they were pointed out. They did not affect the results of the actual voting task. Party descriptions were seen as a way to: ○ Sway floating voters. ○ Help first time voters. When we asked participants their views, their opinions were mixed: ○ A few participants were mildly positive: • _"I suppose it would give more information if you didn't know about their party"._ • _"It's good if you've not voted before"_ ○ Most participants did not like them. Some participants thought they were very sloganised and inappropriate, and there was also comment on the practicality of fitting them on the ballot paper: • _"Safer not to. You could get into bizarre sloganizing, that's dangerous. "_ • _"This is a place where there is no time for election stuff. They are trying to get my attention. I don't like this."_ • _"I don't think that should be allowed. You're going to vote. It cheapens it or something. I don't think you should try to be swayed at the polling booth."_ • _"It's their last sales spiel, I don't like it. Our mind is made up. That aggravates and annoys me."_ • _"They are Americanised, hoping for a cheap last minute victory by swaying floating voters."_ • _"What would happen if it ran over 2 lines? It would be difficult to read the ballot"_ Overall, even though there were a few mildly positive comments, the amount of strong negatives far outweighed these. **Recommendation**: Party descriptions should be kept simple. If this is something that is too difficult to regulate, do not allow them.	L
4.5.2.	**Expanded party descriptions make the ballot more difficult to read**. Most participants were of the feeling that 'less is more' when it comes to the amount of text on the ballot. As a result of this, most thought party descriptions must be kept to a minimum if allowed at all. **Recommendation**: See **point 4.5.1**	L

5.   Conclusion

Individual recommendations have been made in this report to address each issue directly.

The usability testing of ballot papers highlighted many positive issues, and the post-test comments captured these also.

The main **positive findings** include:

Ballot papers:

- ○ Logos on the ballot paper meant participants could easily identify their party/candidate.
- ○ A clear visual indicator of where to cast the vote is helpful.

Posters:

- ○ Graduated text size on booth posters caught the attention of participants.
- ○ Shorter paragraphs on posters increased readability.
- ○ When using first-past-the-post ballots, participants were able to vote confidently according to their intentions.

However, there were a number of usability issues that were noted during the testing, which highlighted a number of problems.

The **highest priority issues** are highlighted below:

Ballot papers:

- ○ Participants did not understand why multiple candidates were listed alongside party names for closed list voting (e.g. as used for the European Parliament) and they were unsure if the vote was for the party or for the candidate.

Posters:

- ○ The instructions clumsily lead the voter through the voting process. Instructions should be given where and when they are needed. E.g. First past the post voting, you are told outside the booth what type of mark to make, but not inside.
- ○ Text needs to be kept as minimal and informative as possible on instructions. Providing the voter with too much to read means they are more likely to read little or nothing at all.

Postal voting:

- ○ The witness instruction for postal voting in Northern Ireland was unclear. Do they witness your vote, or your signature?
- ○ On the postal voting statement, the instructions were on the back of the page after the signature. Some participants missed them altogether; others misinterpreted them.
- ○ Textual and illustrative instructions on postal voting did not match up, both in content and numerically. Images used in the illustrated instructions for postal voting did not always resemble what they were illustrating. By having images that are not realistic, this added to the confusion of the postal voting process.

We recommend addressing as many of the higher severity usability issues ('High' to 'Medium' range) as possible, and as many other of the issues that the Electoral Commission also feels it can address in the good practice guidelines. Any remaining issues should be considered as soon as is practical.

5.1.   Next steps

We recommend creating guidelines for best practice based on the information gathered. Designs should be produced and further rounds of in depth usability testing conducted throughout the UK to ensure the recommendations have been implemented successfully, and no new issues have been introduced that might reduce the ease of use throughout the user experience of voting.

Although we looked at the voter journey through the voting experience, we excluded talking to staff within polling stations as this is not in the scope of the project. The Electoral Commission might wish to consider recommendations or instructions to polling station staff within the scope of their project.

6. Further information

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us:

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Appendix A: Task Scenarios

The target for fully successful task completion is indicated in the middle column. The users did not see these descriptions during the actual testing.

A.1.   Task scenarios

	Task instructions	Target	Notes
1.	**UK Parliamentary vote** – can the participant correctly complete the ballot paper correctly?	*Target: Participant will complete ballot paper correctly.*	Did the participant read the guidance posters beforehand? Did they vote against their intention? Did reading the guidance posters help/hinder voting? How many votes did they use/expect to use?
2.	Distraction task	*Target: Participant will move onto the next task.*	
3.	**European Elections** - can the participant correctly complete the ballot paper?	*Target: Participant will complete ballot paper correctly.*	Did the participant read the guidance posters beforehand? Did they vote against their intention? Did reading the guidance posters help/hinder voting? How many votes did they use/expect to use?
4.	Distraction task	*Target: Participant will move onto the next task.*	

5.	**Local Govt** - can the participant correctly complete the ballot paper?	*Target: Participant will complete ballot paper correctly.*	Did the participant read the guidance posters beforehand? Did they vote against their intention? Did reading the guidance posters help/hinder voting? How many votes did they use/expect to use?
6.	Distraction task	*Target: Participant will move onto the next task.*	
7.	**London Mayor elections** - can the participant correctly complete the ballot papers? o Mayor elections o London members o Constituency members	*Target: Participant will complete ballot papers correctly.*	Did the participant read the guidance posters beforehand? Did they vote against their intention? Did reading the guidance posters help/hinder voting? How many votes did they use/expect to use?
8.	Distraction task	*Target: Participant will move onto the next task.*	
	Postal voting - Can the participant correctly complete the postal voting statement and ballot paper, and put them in the correct envelopes.	*Target: The participant will have correctly completed the postal voting statement and ballot paper, and put them in the correct envelopes.*	Did the participant read the instructions? Did they vote against their intentions? Did they give their date of birth and signature correctly? Did reading the instructions help/hinder them?

Appendix B: Users tested

The usability tests were conducted with 45 participants' representative of the target audience. User Vision, Effortmark, and the Electoral Commission specified the user profiles; User Vision and Effortmark undertook recruitment and scheduling. All participants were offered an incentive of £40 (£50 in London) to participate in the testing. The user profiles for each group are shown below in more detail.

All participants signed a consent form giving their permission to record the session to be used as required, and all participants were told they would be observed during the London sessions by members of the Electoral Commission.

B.1.   Test dates and times

The testing took place on these dates for the different projects:

4th Nov 2008 – London

6th & 7th Nov 2008 – Cornwall

5th & 6th Nov 2008 – Wales

7th & 10th Nov 2008 – Edinburgh

11th & 12th Nov 2008 – Belfast

B.2. Summary of User Profiles

The participants were recruited based on criteria agreed with the Electoral Commission. We decided whether participants were 'rural', 'suburban' or 'urban' by asking them.

Country	Rural	Suburban	Urban	Total
England	6	4	2	12
Wales	3	6	2	11
Scotland	5	-	5	10
Northern Ireland	1	8	3	12
Total	15	18	12	45

Attitude towards voting:

Active   I always try to vote if I can

Moderate   I have voted in the past, but am not too bothered if I don't

New   I have never voted before, but I am eligible to

Age	Active voter	Moderate voter	New to voting	Total
18-24	1	-	10	11
25-34	6	2	3	11
35-44	7	8	2	17
45-67	5	1	-	6
Total	19	11	15	45

Previous methods of voting used	Total
By post	4
By post/in person	4
In person	23
None, new to voting	14
Total	45

We deliberately skewed recruiting towards lower-level jobs and lower levels of educational qualifications. These groups are more numerous in the population and we anticipated that they would have more difficulties in voting.

Social segment is based on the widely used segmentation model:

Segment	Typical Occupation
A	Higher managerial, administrative or professional
B	Intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
C1	Supervisory or clerical and junior managerial, administrative or professional
C2	Skilled manual workers
D	Semi and unskilled manual workers
E	Casual or lowest grade workers, pensioners and others who depend on the state for their income

Highest level of education achieved:

LOW	X1 – 4 GCSE / O Levels or equivalent
MEDUIM	AS / A Level or equivalent
HIGH	Degree or equivalent

Segment	Highest level of education achieved			Total
	High	Medium	Low	
A	-	-	-	0
B	2	1	-	3
C1	1	9	-	10
C2	2	2	2	6
D	3	5	10	18
E	1	1	6	8
Total	9	18	18	45

18 participants were in receipt of one or more state benefits.

Self-reported ethnic origin	Mother tongue	Total
Black British	English	3
British	English	30
Kosovan	Kosovan	1
Nigerian	English	1
Northern Irish	English	6
Polish	Polish	1
Welsh	English / Welsh	3
Total		45

England

Participant	Age	Seg	Nationality/ Mother Tongue	Type of area living in	Highest level of education achieved	Social/state benefits received	methods of voting used	Attitude towards voting
1	35-44	E	British - English	Urban	Low	Jobseeker's Allowance	In person	Active
2	25-34	C2	Polish - Polish	Suburban	High	None	In person	Active
3	35-44	C1	Kosovan - Kosovan	Urban	Medium	None	By post, in person	Moderate
4	35-44	D	British - English	Suburban	Low	None	None – New to voting	New
5	18-24	C2	British - English	Suburban	Low	None	None – New to voting	New
6	35-44	D	British - English	Suburban	Low	Child Benefit, Working Family tax credit	By post, in person	Moderate
7	45-67	E	British - English	Rural	Low	None	In person	Active
8	35-44	E	British - English	Rural	Medium	Job seeker's	In person	Moderate
9	35-44	D	British - English	Rural	Low	Income support	In person	Moderate
10	35-44	C1	British - English	Rural	High	None	By post, in person	Active
11	18-24	E	British - English	Rural	Low	Job seeker's	None – New to voting	New
12	18-24	D	British - English	Rural	Medium	None	None – New to voting	New

Wales

Participant	Age	Seg	Nationality/ Mother Tongue	Type of area living in	Highest level of education achieved	Social/state benefits received	methods of voting used	Attitude towards voting
1	35-44	C1	Welsh - English (Welsh)	Rural	Medium	None	In person	Active
2	35-44	E	Nigerian - English	Urban	High	Carer's Allowance, Council Tax Benefit, Disability Living Allowance, Income Support	In person	Active
3	25-34	D	Welsh - English (Welsh)	Suburban	Low	Jobseeker's Allowance	None – New to voting	New
4	18-24	D	British - English	Suburban	Low	None	None – New to voting	New
5	45-67	E	British - English	Suburban	Low	Income Support	In person	Active
6	35-44	D	British - English	Urban	Medium	None	By post	Moderate
7	45-67	E	British - English	Suburban	Low	Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit	In person	Moderate
8	35-44	C1	British - English	Rural	Medium	None	In person	Active
9	25-34	C1	Welsh - English (Welsh)	Suburban	Medium	None	In person	Active
10	35-44	B	British - English	Rural	Medium	None	In person	Moderate
11	35-44	D	British - English	Suburban	Low	Carer's Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit	In person	Moderate

Scotland

Participant	Age	Seg	Nationality/ Mother Tongue	Type of area living in	Highest level of education achieved	Social/state benefits received	methods of voting used	Attitude towards voting
1	35-44	D	British - English	Urban	Medium	Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Disability Living Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Family Tax Credit	In person	Active
2	18-24	D	British - English	Urban	Low	None	None – new to voting	New
3	25-34	C2	Black British	Rural	Low	Child Tax Credit	By post	Active
4	18-24	D	Black British	Urban	Medium	None	None – new to voting	New
5	35-44	C2	Black British	Rural	Medium	Child Tax Credit, Working Family Tax Credit	In person	Moderate
6	35-44	D	British - English	Urban	Low	Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit, Council Tax Benefit, Working Family Tax Credit	In person	New
7	45-67	D	British - English	Rural	Medium	None	By post	Active
8	25-34	B	British - English	Rural	High	None	By post	Active
9	18-24	C1	British - English	Urban	Medium	None	None – new to voting	New
10	25-34	C1	British - English	Rural	Medium	Child Tax Credit	In person	Active

Northern Ireland

Participant	Age	Seg	Nationality/ Mother Tongue	Type of area living in	Highest level of education achieved	Social/state benefits received	methods of voting used	Attitude towards voting
1	18-24	C1	Northern Irish - English	Suburban	Medium	Jobseeker's Allowance	None – new to voting	New
2	18-24	C2	British - English	Suburban	High	None	In person	Active
3	25-34	C1	British - English	Rural	Medium	None	In person	Moderate
4	25-34	C2	Northern Irish - English	Suburban	Medium	None	None – new to voting	New
5	35-44	C1	British - English	Urban	Medium	Housing Benefit	In person	Active
6	45-67	E	Northern Irish - English	Suburban	Low	Disability Living Allowance	In person	Active
7	18-24	D	Northern Irish - English	Suburban	High	None	None – new to voting	New
8	18-24	D	Northern Irish - English	Suburban	Low	None	None – new to voting	New
9	45-67	D	British - English	Urban	High	None	By post, in person	Active
10	25-34	D	British - English	Suburban	Low	None	In person	Active
11	25-34	D	Northern Irish - English	Suburban	High	None	None – new to voting	New
12	25-34	B	British - English	Urban	High	None	In person	Moderate

Appendix C: Test Interviews and Questionnaires

The post-test questionnaire was used after each voting task.

C.1.   Post-test Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions about the tasks you just completed. Please circle the figure on the scale from fully agree to disagree entirely. Please add your comments on the space at the bottom of the page.

	Fully agree			Neutral	Disagree entirely		
Voting with that ballot was easy.	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3
The instructions are clear.	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3
The design & layout of the ballot paper is good.	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3
I have every confidence that I voted correctly.	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3

C.2.   Post-test interview

The following interviews were used as the basis of the discussion after all voting tasks were completed.

1. Can you provide any comments on the content of the design:
    a. Type of information
    b. Amount of information
    c. Wording/phrasing and language
    d. Title of ballot
    e. Party/candidate/option information (addresses, descriptions)
    f. Numbering of candidates
    g. Inclusion of logos
2. Can you provide any comments on the party descriptions:
    a. What use do these party descriptions have?
    b. Did they make a difference to who you voted for?
    c. Did they help you understand more about the candidates/parties?
    d. Did they make it easier or more difficult for you to vote?
3. Can you provide any comments on the layout of the design:
    a. Positioning of instructions, information, emblems, boxes
    b. Use of space
    c. Size of paper

     d. Use and positioning of columns

     e. Separating ballots and instructions

     f. Order or parties/candidates/choices

     g. Text justification

4. Can you provide any comments on the appearance of the design:

     a. Paper colour

     b. Font: type, size, colour, formatting & style (bold, capitals, underlining)

     c. Size of boxes and emblems

     d. Text/background contrast.

     e. Use of colour and shading