

Performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers

Report into EROs failing a performance standard in all three years

1.1 In April 2011 we published our third report¹ into the performance of Electoral Registration Officer's (EROs) against the performance standards. The performance standards were first published in July 2008² and over the last three years we have seen a steady improvement by all EROs across all ten of the standards. We have found that the majority of EROs now document their plans and processes and are more proactive in using other information to complete and maintain an accurate electoral register.

1.2 However, although considerable progress has been made, there were 44 officers (covering 45 local authorities) who reported performing below a particular standard in each of the three years³. Consequently, we committed to finding out the reasons for this and putting processes in place to ensure these officers do not fall below the same standard in future years.

1.3 Between May and July 2011, we contacted the 44 EROs to discuss why they had fallen below a standard and the action they intended to take to improve. Of the seven standards which EROs had continually failed, five required the documentation of a written plan. In almost all cases, the lack of a plan (or recording of documentation) was the reason for performing below the standard. Standard 1 (information sources) and standard 8 (accessibility and communication) do not require a written plan.

1.4 Twenty six EROs have informed us that they intend to meet the standards in 2011 and have already provided us with the relevant documentation. A further 16⁴ stated that they intended to meet the standard this year and will provide us with suitable evidence at an agreed date. Three EROs either did not or could not provide the required documentation before the start of the annual canvass or would not comply with our requests. We will continue to engage with these EROs in relation to the conduct of their annual canvass in 2011.

¹ http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/116444/ERO-Performance-Report-Final.pdf

² http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/57949/Performancestandards-2008-06-25_final-webres.pdf

³ There were no ERO's who reported performing below standard 2 (property database), standard 5 (supply and security of the register) and standard 10 (training) for all three years

⁴ This figure includes EROs who have provided evidence for some standards but not others.

1.5 All three EROs who reported performing below performance standard 3 (House to house enquiries) informed us that due to differing reasons, they do not personally canvass all properties who have not returned a canvass form. All three EROs have now confirmed that they intend to meet the standard in 2011 by carrying out house-to-house enquiries for every non-responder.

1.6 Historically, the standard at which EROs have performed most poorly has been standard 6 (Public Awareness). We have now received a written plan from just over half (19 out of 35) of the EROs who have failed this standard in all three years. A further 11 EROs have committed to providing us with the plan before the annual canvass.

1.7 The accompanying spread sheet summarises the outcome of our contacts with EROs between May and July 2011 and lists all the relevant EROs, their reasons for falling below a standard and the action they are taking (or intend to take) before the autumn. As part of verifying performance standards assessments, we will be asking to see the relevant documentation (where it has not already been provided) during the canvass period and following up further where necessary.

1.8 We will be asking EROs to report on their performance in September (with a deadline of Friday 16 December) and we will report on their performance early in the New Year. In January 2012 we will also begin a full consultation process on a new set of performance standards for EROs moving towards the implementation of Individual Registration in 2015.