



The  
Electoral  
Commission

# Annual report 2009–10

HC 318



# Annual report 2009–10

Presented to Parliament pursuant to Section 1, Schedule 1(20) of the  
Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000.

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# Aim and values

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## Our aim

Integrity and public confidence in the UK's democratic process

## Our values

**Fair** – we are fair in the way we treat each other and the people and organisations we deal with

**Impartial** – we are impartial in our decisions and actions

**Transparent** – we are transparent about how we work

## Our 2009–10 objectives



Integrity and transparency of party and election finance



Complete and accurate electoral registers supported by a well-run electoral registration process



Well-run elections and referendums which produce results that are accepted



Fair boundary arrangements for elections in England

# Foreword

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Voters need to be confident about the way our democratic process works. People's ability to choose between the competing views of political parties through safe elections that are straightforward, accessible and secure, underpins our democracy. Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic system. We regulate party and election finance and set standards for well-run elections. We are committed to being an organisation that responds effectively to the needs of voters in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

We have a role in rebuilding confidence in democracy. We take a firm, impartial and proportionate approach to the regulation of party and election finance. In 2009–10, we welcomed the changes brought in by the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 (PPE Act). It provides us with a more proportionate range of sanctions to apply when the rules are broken, and more appropriate investigatory powers. It also gives us more options to use constructive new approaches, such as issuing compliance notices requiring parties to change their procedures. We look forward to the commencement of the new powers and sanctions on 1 December 2010.

During 2009, we developed and consulted on a new party and election finance enforcement policy setting out how we will use the new

powers provided by the PPE Act. As part of the consultation process, we met with a wide range of people including MPs, political parties and voters. Their views will be reflected in the final version of the policy. To support our new approach, we have also developed and consulted on formal risk profiling tools to use in our regulatory work. These will help us to target our audit resources and tailor our advice and guidance. These tools are based on the principles of good regulation set out in the Hampton<sup>1</sup> and Macrory<sup>2</sup> reports. We will be working closely with political parties and others we regulate to ensure that they understand the new enforcement policy and our risk-based approach.

Our aim is to ensure that political parties fully understand the rules and comply with them voluntarily. For this reason, we provide comprehensive advice, guidance and training. During 2009–10, we responded to over 2,000 calls to our party and election finance helpline and published a wide range of guidance documents, including information for candidates, agents and political parties. Sometimes, however, we find evidence that the rules have been broken. During 2009–10, we assessed 104 cases of potential non-compliance<sup>3</sup> and carried out 48 case reviews, the majority of which were resolved without the need for further enforcement

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1 Sir Philip Hampton, *Reducing Administrative Burdens: Effective Inspection and Enforcement*, (March 2005), available at [www.berr.gov.uk/files/file22988.pdf](http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file22988.pdf).

2 Professor Richard Macrory, *Regulatory Justice: Making Sanctions Effective, Final Report*, (November 2006), available at [www.berr.gov.uk/files/file44593.pdf](http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file44593.pdf).

3 Of the 104 cases of potential non-compliance assessed, 65 were brought to our attention by external sources, and 39 were identified as a result of our own monitoring activity.

## Foreword (cont.)

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action. We also concluded two investigations. These were particularly complex and involved previously untested areas of the law.

As well as regulating party and election finance, our role is to ensure that elections and electoral registration are well-run and that the voting process is straightforward and secure. In 2009–10, we continued to monitor the performance of Returning Officers (ROs) and Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) against our performance standards framework. ROs are responsible for the conduct of elections in the UK. We reported on their performance in autumn 2009 following the European Parliamentary and English local elections and found that over 90% were meeting all seven performance standards we had set. However, a significant number did not have formal plans in place for ensuring the integrity – the safety and security – of the ballot or for planning and delivering public awareness activities. EROs play an essential role in ensuring electoral registers are accurate and complete. In 2009–10, we carried out our second analysis of ERO performance against our standards. We found some improvement since the first round of assessment, but identified some key areas where further improvement is needed. We drew on the findings to inform our preparations for the UK Parliamentary general election, and will continue to work with ROs and EROs to drive improvements in areas where standards were not met.

In 2009–10, we completed a number of major projects. We carried out research into the completeness and accuracy of electoral registers. Our report, *The completeness and*

*accuracy of electoral registers in Great Britain*,<sup>4</sup> published in March 2010, reviewed registration rates and looked at the factors associated with under-registration. The report showed that registration rates appear to have stabilised since 2006. We also found that, in the case study areas, non-registration and inaccuracy is associated with certain social groups, particularly young people and people from black and minority ethnic communities. People changing address is a significant reason for non-registration.

We also ran one of our most successful public information campaigns, which resulted in approximately 150,000 voter registration forms being ordered from our call centre or downloaded from our website, [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk), ahead of the June 2009 European Parliamentary and English local elections. To help ensure people find voting as easy as possible, we also produced *Making your mark*,<sup>5</sup> a comprehensive resource to support local authorities in producing clear voting materials.

Our achievements could not have been realised without our skilled and dedicated workforce across the UK, and we would like to thank them for their hard work over the year.

We look forward to building on our work in 2010–11, and we will continue to put voters first in all we do.

**Peter Wardle, Chief Executive and  
Jenny Watson, Chair**

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4 The Electoral Commission, *The completeness and accuracy of electoral registers in Great Britain*, [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/87111/The-completeness-and-accuracy-of-electoral-registers-in-Great-Britain.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/87111/The-completeness-and-accuracy-of-electoral-registers-in-Great-Britain.pdf).

5 The Electoral Commission, *Making your mark*, [www.dopolitics.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/80804/Making-Your-Mark-Design-Guidance-For-Electoral-Administrators.pdf](http://www.dopolitics.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/80804/Making-Your-Mark-Design-Guidance-For-Electoral-Administrators.pdf).



## Objective 1 – Integrity and transparency of party and election finance

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People need to be confident that political parties are funded transparently because our democracy is threatened if that confidence does not exist. As the regulator of political party funding in the UK, our role is to ensure the integrity and transparency of party and election finance.

Election law requires that political parties, and other regulated organisations and individuals, only accept donations and loans from certain specified sources. The law also specifies that information about where parties get money from, and how they spend it, must be reported to us and made publicly available.<sup>6</sup> We check that the rules are followed and we publish information about parties' income and expenditure as the law requires.

Our aim is to ensure that political parties and other regulated entities fully understand the rules and comply with them voluntarily. We therefore provide guidance, advice and training to help them meet their legal obligations.

Where we find evidence that suggests the law has been broken, we take appropriate action. Our aim is to regulate in a proportionate and risk-based way, in line with the principles of good regulation. This can range from issuing a fine for a late report, to referring serious cases to the police or the prosecution authorities for further investigation or consideration for criminal prosecution.

The Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 (PPE Act) provides us with a more proportionate range of sanctions to apply when rules are broken, and more appropriate investigatory powers. A statutory instrument has been laid in Parliament paving the way for commencement of the new powers and sanctions on 1 December 2010. We will continue to work with the Government, political parties and others to ensure that the legal framework governing political finance remains relevant and up-to-date.

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<sup>6</sup> As required by legislation, we do not publish donations and loans reported to us by parties registered in Northern Ireland.



## Key performance indicators

Measure	Target	Performance
<b>Output and outcome measures<sup>7</sup></b>		
Percentage of responses for a) routine advice issued within 5 working days of receipt and b) for formal advisory opinions and advice on novel and complex matters issued within 30 working days of receipt <sup>8</sup>	a) <b>95%</b> b) <b>90%</b>	a) <b>97%</b> (2,403 of 2,467) b) <b>94%</b> (229 of 244)
Percentage of cases involving potential breaches of the rules resolved within 6 months	<b>90%</b>	<b>94%</b> (45 of 48)
Percentage of statutory returns from those we regulate that are submitted on time <sup>9</sup>	Improving trend on 2008 figure of <b>92%</b>	<b>96%</b> (2,901 of 3,030)
Percentage of returns submitted on time which we publish within 20 working days	<b>100%</b>	<b>99%</b> (911 of 923)
Percentage of donations reported in the correct quarter by a) accounting units and b) by party headquarters	Improving trend on 2008 figures of a) <b>95%</b> b) <b>99%</b>	a) <b>94%</b> (3,137 of 3,327) b) <b>97%</b> (1,166 of 1,196)
Percentage of new political parties registered within 20 days <sup>10</sup>	<b>95%</b>	<b>100%</b> (109 of 109)
<b>Progress indicators<sup>11</sup></b>		
Percentage of the UK public who are confident that the authorities would take appropriate action if someone was caught breaking party finance rules	Improving trend on 2008–9 figure of <b>41%</b>	<b>31%</b>

<sup>7</sup> Output and outcome measures help us monitor activities that we are either wholly in control of or those that we are able to significantly influence.

<sup>8</sup> See Table 8 below.

<sup>9</sup> Some parties are exempt from reporting. The figures presented in this report include those parties. See Tables 5, 6 and 7 below.

<sup>10</sup> See 'Registering political parties' on page 5.

<sup>11</sup> Progress indicators provide us with information that helps to target our activities.



## Key performance indicators (cont.)

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We met the majority of our targets. There were some initial problems with a new statements of accounts search tool that led to 22 statements of accounts not being published within our target (out of a total of 818 received). This problem was only in relation to a number of statements of accounts for smaller parties<sup>12</sup> – all other statutory returns were published within 20 working days of receipt. Despite the initial problems, we now have a new and more efficient search tool for party accounts.

We saw fewer on-time donation reports than we aimed for, with a number of donations being reported in a later quarter than they should have been. While we have no direct control over the percentage of donations reported in the correct quarter we encouraged compliance by pressing the parties involved to set out plans to ensure that they report on time in the future.

## Registering political parties

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Political parties are required to register with us to contest elections in the UK. We maintain two registers of political parties – one for Great Britain and one for Northern Ireland. We revised our guidance on registering parties following changes introduced by the PPE Act. We provide guidance and support for anyone wanting to register a political party, and inform them of their responsibilities. Where possible we meet with applicants before they register to discuss the statutory requirements involved in registering a party.

On 31 December 2009, 384 parties were registered with us. Sixty-two new parties registered with us during 2009, all of which were registered within 20 days of us receiving their application. We are keen to ensure party details are accurate so that we can regulate them effectively. For this reason we deregistered 17 parties for failure to submit annual confirmations of registered details. A further 33 parties voluntarily deregistered during 2009.

In the lead up to the UK general election, for the period 1 January 2010 to 31 March 2010, 63 new parties registered with us.

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<sup>12</sup> Parties with income and expenditure of £250,000 or less.



## Key activities

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### **Demonstrate that we carry out our regulatory role effectively, fairly and impartially, to raise confidence in the integrity and transparency of party and election finance.**

▶ Political parties are required to provide us with information each quarter on donations they have received and loans they have taken out. The quarters are based on the calendar year, with quarter one running from January to March. Parties are also required to provide us with a statement of their accounts every year, with most parties using December as their year end.<sup>13</sup> We publish the data from political parties in Great Britain on our website, and make it available to the media and the public. Parties registered to contest elections in Northern Ireland are also required to declare information on donations they have received and loans they have taken. However, as required by legislation, we do not publish donations and loans reported to us by parties registered in Northern Ireland. This legal requirement comes to an end on 31 October 2010. The Northern Ireland Office will be undertaking a consultation on whether or not to extend confidentiality for up to another two years. We recently published research that showed that over 60% of those asked would support full disclosure of donations and loans information in Northern Ireland.<sup>14</sup>

▶ Parties are required to provide us with this information on their donations and loans within 30 days following the end of a quarter.<sup>15</sup> For 2009 97.5% of returns were submitted within this deadline, an increase from 92% in 2008. We aim to publish the information within 20 working days of receiving a return. For 2009 returns we published 100% of donation and loan returns reported to us within this target.

▶ For 2009, we published data relating to more than £59 million in donations and £10.5 million of new borrowing.<sup>16</sup> At the end of 2009, parties had £15.7 million of loans outstanding.<sup>17</sup> The tables below detail donations and borrowing reported to us during the 2009 calendar year. More information can be found on our website.

▶ We also aim to provide information and analysis on spending by parties for elections. Our report on spending at the 2009 European Parliamentary elections showed that parties spent just over £9 million on campaigning in Great Britain. For Northern Ireland, parties contesting the European Parliamentary elections are required to report to the Commission, while candidates submit expense returns to the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland parties spent almost £247,000 on campaigning, with candidates spending an additional £512,000.

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<sup>13</sup> Because statutory reports are generally made in relation to the calendar year the figures in this report for statutory returns (including donation returns and filing of statement of accounts) are based on calendar year, not financial year.

<sup>14</sup> [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/82126/lpsos-Mori-Research-Report-On-Party-And-Election-Finance-In-Northern-Ireland.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/82126/lpsos-Mori-Research-Report-On-Party-And-Election-Finance-In-Northern-Ireland.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Donations and Loans: Guidance for Political Parties in Great Britain*, [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/electoral\\_commission\\_pdf\\_file/0018/13707/Guidance-on-donations-and-loans-to-a-political-party.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/electoral_commission_pdf_file/0018/13707/Guidance-on-donations-and-loans-to-a-political-party.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> Based on data from the register of borrowings <http://registers.electoralcommission.org.uk/templates/search/document.cfm/22749>.

<sup>17</sup> Based on data from the register of borrowings <http://registers.electoralcommission.org.uk/templates/search/document.cfm/22749>.

## Key activities

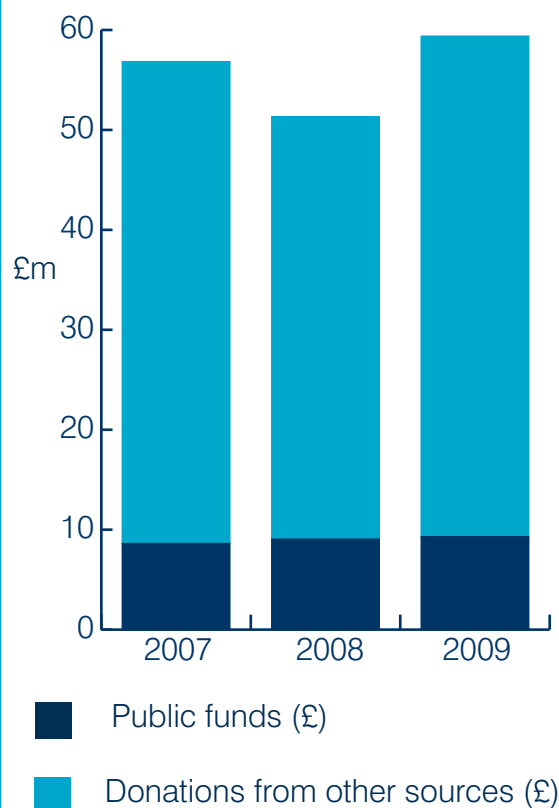
**Table 1: Total donations reported by all parties for 2009 (Great Britain only)**

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Public funds (£) <sup>18</sup>	2,133,162	2,724,230	1,943,207	2,501,071	9,301,670
Donations from other sources (£)	9,966,096	13,324,595	9,649,914	17,142,498	50,083,103
<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>12,099,258</b>	<b>16,048,825</b>	<b>11,593,121</b>	<b>19,643,569</b>	<b>59,384,773</b>

**Table 2: Year on year comparison of donations (Great Britain only)**

	2007	2008	2009
Public funds (£) <sup>18</sup>	8,614,653	9,057,227	9,301,670
Donations from other sources (£)	48,221,923	42,257,769	50,083,103
<b>Total (£)</b>	<b>56,836,576</b>	<b>51,314,996</b>	<b>59,384,773</b>

**Figure 1: Year on year comparison of donations (Great Britain only)**



<sup>18</sup> Public funds are paid to eligible political parties. They are: Policy Development grants, paid by the Electoral Commission; Short Money, paid by the House of Commons; Cranborne Money, paid by the House of Lords; Assistance to Registered Political Parties, paid by the Scottish Parliament. Political parties may not use public funds to meet the costs of election campaigning.



## Key activities

**Table 3: Total amount of donations reported in 2009 for parties with more than £100,000 in declared income (Great Britain only)**

Party	Public funds (£)	Donations from other sources <sup>19</sup> (£)	Total (£)
Conservative Party	5,428,014	26,929,097	32,357,111
Labour Party [The]	1,007,201	15,194,912	16,202,113
Liberal Democrats	2,326,175	3,829,138	6,155,313
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	0	1,402,987	1,402,987
Co-operative Party [The]	0	924,916	924,916
Scottish National Party	260,142	160,879	421,021
Plaid Cymru – Party of Wales [The]	271,187	142,656	413,843
Green Party [The] <sup>20</sup>	0	351,913	351,913
Christian Party “Proclaiming Christ’s Lordship”	0	273,937	273,937
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,292,719</b>	<b>49,210,435</b>	<b>58,503,154</b>

<sup>19</sup> This includes cash and non-cash donations only.

<sup>20</sup> The Green Party of England and Wales only.

## Key activities

**Table 4: Breakdown of borrowing taken in 2009 by Conservative/Labour/Liberal Democrat/Plaid Cymru/Scottish National Party and other parties<sup>21</sup>**

	Loans (£)		Credit facilities (£)		Connected transactions (£)	
	Entered into	Repaid	Entered into	Extinguished	Entered into	Ended
Conservative Party	143,608	2,759,114	5,010,000	0	0	0
Labour Party [The]	16,649	1,513,651	4,000,000	2,000,000	600,000	0
Liberal Democrats	100,876	13,728	6,000	35,000	0	0
Plaid Cymru – Party of Wales [The]	0	0	0	0	0	0
SNP	50,000	0	0	0	0	0
Other parties	571,452	28,460	20,000	0	0	0

**Table 5: Donation returns received for 2009 within statutory deadlines<sup>22</sup>**

	Jan–Mar	Apr–Jun	Jul–Sept	Oct–Dec
Returns due	335	335	337	335
Number received within statutory deadlines	329	326	328	331

<sup>21</sup> Other parties are Christian Party, Jury Team, Left List, Pensioners Party, Scottish Greens, UKIP.

<sup>22</sup> Registered parties are required by law to submit details of donations they have received each quarter within a statutory deadline. Some parties are exempt under the Electoral Administration Act 2006.



## Key activities

Table 6: Borrowing returns received for 2009 within statutory deadlines<sup>23</sup>

	Jan–Mar	Apr–Jun	Jul–Sept	Oct–Dec
Returns due	335	335	337	335
Number received within statutory deadlines	323	319	327	325

Table 7: Statements of accounts received in 2009

	Received	Late	Not received
Number received from political parties <sup>24</sup>	308 (includes late submitted)	34	17
Number received from accounting units	510 (includes late submitted)	18	N/a

<sup>23</sup> Registered parties are required by law to submit details of borrowing they have made each quarter within a statutory deadline. Some parties are exempt under the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

<sup>24</sup> Political parties with gross income and total expenditure below £250,000, and party accounting units with income or expenditure above £25,000, are required to submit their statement of accounts within four months of the end of their financial year. Parties and accounting units with income or expenditure above £250,000 are required to submit their statement of accounts to us within six months and seven days of the end of their financial year.



## Key activities

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**Develop our powers to regulate effectively in a changing world, drawing on good regulatory practice elsewhere.**

- ▶ Based on our experience as a regulator since 2001, we have been calling for a wider range of legal powers to use when the rules are broken. We therefore welcomed the new powers introduced by the PPE Act, passed by the UK Parliament in July 2009.
- ▶ Secondary legislation must be put in place before many of our new powers will come

into effect. To prepare for this, we have developed a new enforcement policy, following consultation with those we regulate.

- ▶ We have developed and consulted on formal risk profiling tools to use in our regulatory work, based on the principles of good regulation set out in the Hampton and Macrory reports.
- ▶ For more information on the PPE Act and the work we are doing to prepare for our new powers, see below.



### Better regulation – the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009

People need to be confident that political parties follow the rules on party and election finance, so it is important that we take firm and impartial action when the rules are broken. The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act (PPERA) gives us limited options for dealing with cases where party and election finance laws are broken. We can impose a fixed fine – that is not always proportionate – or refer a case for criminal investigation. Our investigatory powers are also limited and we can only require evidence from certain people.

We called for more powers to strengthen our role as a regulator and so welcomed the changes introduced in the PPE Act. The Act provides a wider range of sanctions for dealing with non-compliance. These include a greater range of more proportionate fines, and constructive new approaches, such as compliance notices requiring parties to change their procedures. Our investigatory powers were also strengthened. Where we have reason to believe the law has been broken, we will be able to require evidence from any person with relevant information rather than just those we regulate. We are looking forward to the secondary legislation that will put these changes into effect.

During 2009, we developed and consulted on a new enforcement policy setting out how we will use our new powers. As part of the consultation process, we wrote to and met a wide range of people and organisations, including elected representatives and political parties. We also commissioned independent research to ensure that we heard views from members of the public and volunteer treasurers at the local level. Their views, together with any further points raised in Parliament during debate on the secondary legislation, will inform the final version of the policy, which will be published before 1 December 2010.

As well as the new sanctions and investigatory powers, we are developing a formal risk framework, in line with the principles of good regulation set out in the Hampton and Macrory reports. The risk-based approach will help us understand where non-compliance is most likely to occur and what sort of impact it could have. This understanding will allow us to target our advice, training and regulatory activities effectively towards those at greatest risk of non-compliance.



## Key activities

Advise and guide those we regulate and others on regulatory issues to promote compliance with the law.

- ▶ Wherever possible, we seek to use advice and guidance, rather than enforcement action, in order to secure compliance with the law. We deliver training and provide guidance to promote compliance.
- ▶ Following the PPE Act, we updated our guidance on candidates' expenses, sent out briefing papers to explain the changes to the law, and talked with affected groups, including party volunteers and third parties to ensure they understood what they needed to do.
- ▶ We carried out a major review of our party and election finance guidance materials to make sure they were as clear, user-friendly and effective as possible. We developed a new approach to delivering guidance that would make compliance with the law more straightforward. We will begin to publish new guidance based on the outcomes of the review in summer 2010.

**In 2009–10 we dealt with 2,467 enquiries on issues ranging from candidates' expenses to non-party campaigning.**

- ▶ We provide a year-round enquiry service so that those we regulate can access advice on specific party and election finance issues. In 2009–10 we dealt with 2,467 enquiries on issues ranging from candidates' expenses to non-party campaigning. We responded to 97% of routine enquiries within five working days.
- ▶ In preparation for the UK general election, we published updated guidance for candidates and agents on standing for election and dealing with expenses, and for political parties and non-party campaigners on the spending rules that apply to them.

Table 8: Number of enquiries and resolution times

	Number of routine enquiries	Percentage responded to within 5 working days	Number of novel and complex enquiries or those requiring formal advisory opinions	Percentage responded to within 30 working days
Apr–Jun	543	98.5%	29	93%
Jul–Sept	449	97%	23	100%
Oct–Dec	533	95%	21	95%
Jan–Apr	942	98%	171	93%



## Key activities

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### **Develop and improve our statutory returns processes and registers to ensure transparency and promote compliance with the law.**

▶ We are developing an online system which will allow those we regulate to submit quarterly returns and accounts and update party details in one central place. The new system will make filling in returns more straightforward for parties and make the publishing process more efficient. Financial information will also be easier to search. The new system will be launched in late 2010.

▶ We would like to see a more transparent approach to the reporting of accounts. In 2009–10, following consultation with parties, we developed a proposal to introduce standard requirements for the statements of accounts parties are required to submit to us. We will be working to take this project forward so that a standardised format for statements of accounts can be introduced in a way that minimises burdens on parties and their staff, many of whom are volunteers.

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### **Take necessary and proportionate enforcement action to promote compliance with the law and deal appropriately with those who do not comply.**

▶ We aim to ensure compliance through guidance and training to help those we regulate to follow the rules on party and election finance, but we take a fair, impartial and proportionate approach when the rules are broken.

▶ In cases of non-compliance, our current powers allow us to take only a limited number of actions, including issuing fines for late submitted returns, requiring forfeiture of impermissible donations, and referring cases to the police.

▶ We assessed 104 cases of potential non-compliance with party and election finance laws in 2009–10. Of these, 53 cases did not meet our criteria to warrant investigation or review and were closed at the initial assessment stage.

▶ We completed 48 case reviews during the year.<sup>25</sup> Twenty-five were closed where we found there had been no failure to comply. In 14 cases we found that there was a breach of the rules but concluded that no further action was necessary as the party or individual concerned had, following contact from us, rectified errors in returns or submitted information required under the rules. A number of cases were closed as it was considered that it was not in the public interest for further action to be taken. These included some cases where the only avenue currently open to the Commission would have been to refer the case to the police to investigate. Of the nine cases closed following further action, five cases were closed following voluntary forfeiture of impermissible donations.

▶ Two investigations were closed with a finding of no failure to comply. One case review was passed to our advice and guidance team for them to provide advice to the party on compliance with obligations under PPERA. We resolved just under 94% of cases involving potential breaches of rules within six months.

▶ We reviewed 818 statements of accounts for 2008<sup>26</sup> and levied 53 penalties for late or non-submission of statements of accounts: 42 to political parties and 11 to accounting units.

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<sup>25</sup> Some cases were still under consideration at the end of the period.

<sup>26</sup> A small number of parties use a different accounting period but most use year end of December.



## Key activities

► Compliance with statutory returns deadlines rose from 92% in 2008 to 96% in 2009. Civil penalties apply where parties submit returns late or fail to submit returns. Seventy-five penalties were issued between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2010. Seventeen related to donation or loan returns, five related to campaign expenditure returns and 53 related to statements of accounts. Ten penalties were paid, totalling £3,400. Where a penalty is issued a party has the right to appeal against the penalty being applied or pursued. We waived a total of 34 penalties for a variety of reasons. These included illness of treasurers and returns received late due to actions beyond the control of the party, including due to postal disruption. Thirty-one penalties are currently outstanding and these will be reviewed on the basis of information provided by the party or available about the party's finances.

► We carried out permissibility checks on all donations reported to us and worked with parties to ensure that they provided accurate information.

► More than £10,000 of impermissible donations were voluntarily forfeited by political parties in 2009–10. We concluded two of our most complex investigations involving alleged impermissible donations to date, which both involved previously untested areas of the law. See page 16 for more information.

► When the new powers and sanctions in the PPE Act come into effect they will enable us to deal more appropriately with those who do not comply with the rules on party and election finance. We will be able to apply a wider range of sanctions including a range of financial penalties and requiring a party take specified steps to become compliant. For further information on our new powers, see page 11.

Table 9: Number and source of new cases handled<sup>27</sup>

Category <sup>28</sup>	Total	Internal	External
New cases assessed	104	39	65

<sup>27</sup> The figures in Table 9 are for the 12 months from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010. There were 11 cases carried over from 2008–9.

<sup>28</sup> 'Internal' refers to cases identified as a result of our own monitoring activity. 'External' refers to cases brought to our attention by external sources.

## Key activities

**Table 10: Number of cases resolved or outstanding<sup>29</sup>**

Category	Total	Average time to resolve
Closed at initial assessment stage	53	2.5 working days (Target of 90% within 5 working days)
Case reviews closed: No failure to comply	25	72 calendar days (Target of 90% within 90 calendar days of initial assessment)
Case reviews closed: Failure to comply – No action taken	14	
Case reviews closed: Failure to comply – Action taken	9	
Investigations closed: No failure to comply	2	446 calendar days (Target of 90% within 6 months of initial assessment) <sup>30</sup>
Investigations closed: Failure to comply – No action taken	0	
Cases referred to policy and guidance	1	15 calendar days
Cases deferred at end of reporting period <sup>31</sup>	4	0
Cases open at end of year	7	0

**Table 11: Number of permissibility checks<sup>32</sup>**

Quarter	Checks
1	827
2	1,151
3	1,032
4	1,510
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,520</b>

<sup>29</sup> The figures in Table 10 are for the 12 months from 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010.

<sup>30</sup> While we aim to complete investigations within six months of the initial assessment the time taken in each investigation will vary with the specific issues raised by the nature of the individual investigations, the availability and volume of evidence and the legal issues involved. In each case we will take the time necessary to conduct a thorough and fair investigation.

<sup>31</sup> Deferred pending judicial decision.

<sup>32</sup> We conduct checks on all reported donations to assess whether, on the information available, they are from sources (e.g. an individual or a company) which are allowed to make donations under PPERA.



## Our enforcement activities

We look carefully at cases of potential non-compliance with the rules on party and election finance. These include failing to provide financial information on time or accepting impermissible donations. We have limited powers in relation to late submission of information and can only issue fixed penalties. We consider carefully representations on penalties where it is in the public interest to do so. Wherever there is non-compliance, we work with those who have failed to comply to ensure future compliance. In addition to issuing fines, we consider other appropriate action, including providing guidance and referring cases to the police.

The main areas we considered in the 48 case reviews closed during the year were:

- the quality of record-keeping by party accounting units
- non-submission of candidate expenses returns
- potentially impermissible donations
- non-reporting of financial data.

We have powers to require parties to forfeit impermissible donations, and during the year parties voluntarily forfeited more than £10,000. In a current case between the Electoral Commission and the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) the Supreme Court heard UKIP's appeal in June 2010 and we await the decision from the Court.

We concluded two of our most complex investigations to date, which both involved previously untested areas of the law. In November 2009, we announced the outcome of the investigation into donations of over £2.4m made by the company 5th Avenue Partners Ltd

to the Liberal Democrats.<sup>33</sup> We looked at whether the company was a permissible donor and was reported correctly as the true donor. The investigation considered a substantial volume of evidence and involved consideration of a number of areas of law untested in the courts. We concluded that the company was a permissible donor and that the donations were made by the company.

In March 2010, we announced the outcome of our investigation into donations reported by the Conservative Party from Bearwood Corporate Services Limited (BCS).<sup>34</sup> The investigation again involved consideration of a substantial volume of evidence and involved consideration of a number of legal issues. We concluded that BCS was a permissible donor and that there was no basis to conclude that the donor was anyone other than BCS. We found that there was insufficient evidence to conclude that the party was uncertain as to the identity of the donor when accepting the donations.

We conducted a thorough investigation into the BCS case using the evidence available to us. However, our powers were limited including a lack of power to require witnesses to attend for interview and a lack of power to require evidence from anyone other than those we regulate. The PPE Act once fully implemented will introduce changes to our enforcement powers enabling us to require evidence from anyone with relevant information and enabling us to call individuals for interview.

<sup>33</sup> For further information on the case relating to 5th Avenue Partners Ltd and the Liberal Democrats, see [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_media/executive-summary/5th-avenue-statement-case-summary-11-09.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_media/executive-summary/5th-avenue-statement-case-summary-11-09.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> For information on the case relating to Bearwood Corporate Services Limited and the Conservative Party, see [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/87219/Case-summary-Bearwood-Corporate-Services.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/87219/Case-summary-Bearwood-Corporate-Services.pdf).



## Looking ahead

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We will continue to work to ensure transparency and integrity of party and election finance in 2010–11. We will finalise and publish our new enforcement policy, setting out how we will use the new powers and sanctions in the PPE Act. We will also provide new and improved guidance for those we regulate, based on the review of our guidance that we conducted in 2009–10. Our

report on spending at the UK general election will analyse how parties funded their campaigns for the election and how they spent their money. We will continue to ensure transparency by publishing the financial information that parties must submit to us, and take appropriate action when the rules are broken.



## Objective 2 – Complete and accurate electoral registers supported by a well-run electoral registration process

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Electoral registers must be as complete and accurate as possible so that everyone who is eligible to vote can, and that there are no false entries. We want people who are entitled to vote to be confident that registering to vote is as straightforward, accessible and secure as possible. We also want them to receive a consistently high-quality service wherever they live.

Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) are responsible for compiling and maintaining complete and accurate electoral registers.<sup>35</sup> The UK Government is responsible for the legal and funding framework that enables EROs to fulfil their responsibilities.

We aim to drive up standards in voter registration. We monitor performance of EROs through our performance standards framework and research programme, to highlight where electoral registration is well-run and to challenge EROs where it is not. We also challenge the Government where the legal framework needs to change to improve the service received by electors. We provide a wide range of support to drive improvements in electoral registration practice.

We continue to develop understanding of the extent to which electoral registers are incomplete or inaccurate and how best to tackle these weaknesses. We scrutinise proposals for changes to electoral law to ensure voters' interests are put first.

We run UK-wide public information campaigns to ensure people understand how to register to vote and encourage them to do so. These campaigns target particularly under-registered groups such as young people, people who have recently moved home, people in private rented accommodation and some ethnic minority communities.

We welcomed Parliament's decision to introduce individual electoral registration (IER) in the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 (PPE Act). The current system of household registration has come under sustained criticism because of its potential vulnerability to large-scale fraud, as well as its outdated focus on the position of 'head of the household'. Under IER, EROs would ask people to provide three pieces of 'identifying information' (signature, date of birth, and national insurance number) to be registered to vote. It places responsibility for registering on individuals rather than one person in a household, and will help to modernise the electoral system. The PPE Act also provides for EROs to pilot the use of data from other public sources of information to help improve the completeness and accuracy of the registers, and we will be responsible for evaluating any such pilot schemes.

Northern Ireland has used a system of IER since 2002, and we look forward to using the experience of implementing IER there to help inform change in Great Britain. We will play a key role in assessing the success of the move to IER.

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<sup>35</sup> In Northern Ireland, this is the responsibility of the Chief Electoral Officer.



## Key performance indicators

Measure	Target	Performance
Output and outcome measures <sup>36</sup>		
Percentage of electors in Great Britain whose EROs meet or exceed the performance standards relating to complete and accurate electoral registration records	Improving trend against 2008–9 figure of <b>84%</b> (around 37.9m electors out of 45m)	<b>96%</b> (around 43.3m electors out of 45.3m)
Percentage of EROs who meet or exceed the performance standards relating to a) integrity b) participation c) planning activities in relation to keeping a complete and accurate electoral register	Improving trend against standards across this area against 2008–9 figures of: a) Integrity – <b>63%</b> (255 of 404 EROs) b) Participation – <b>31%</b> (125 of 404 EROs) c) Planning – <b>75%</b> (303 of 404 EROs)	a) Integrity – <b>85%</b> (322 of 379 EROs) b) Participation – <b>56%</b> (212 EROs) c) Planning – <b>90%</b> (341 EROs)
Percentage of queries from EROs (by telephone/email) acknowledged on first working day and responded to fully within three working days	<b>100%</b>	<b>98%</b> (296 of 301 queries)

(Continued overleaf)

<sup>36</sup> Output and outcome measures help us monitor activities that we are either wholly in control of or those that we are able to significantly influence.



## Key performance indicators (cont.)

Measure	Target	Performance
Output and outcome measures		
Number of registration forms ordered as a result of information campaigns run by the Commission (including campaigns run in the lead up to elections)	Achieving response targets for election campaigns  Improving trend for other campaigns, e.g. micro-campaigns directed at students, <sup>37</sup> British citizens abroad and recent home-movers	Approximately 150,000 registration forms were ordered from our call centre or downloaded from our website during the European Parliamentary and English local election campaign, against a target of 50,000.  Almost 7,400 British citizens abroad downloaded registration forms during our 2009 campaign, <b>99%</b> more than during our 2008 campaign.  The 2009 home-movers campaign generated approximately 50,000 new registrations compared with 84,500 in 2008 (although we sent out 90,000 fewer registration packs in 2009).
Progress indicators <sup>38</sup>		
Number of electors on the a) UK local government and b) UK Parliamentary electoral registers <sup>39</sup>	Improving trend on 2008–9 figures of: a) 46,147,877 b) 45,194,449	a) 46,455,890, up by around 308,000 b) 45,420,808, up by around 226,000
Percentage of the UK public who say they know how to register to vote	Improving trend on 2008–9 figure of <b>88%</b>	<b>89%</b> <sup>40</sup>

We exceeded the majority of our targets during 2009–10. Although the performance of EROs against our performance standards improved, there are some gaps in performance that must be addressed (see page 25). Our public awareness campaigns for the European

Parliamentary and English local elections and for British citizens living abroad well exceeded targets, although our campaign directed at recent home-movers did not perform as well as expected.

37 No student campaign was conducted in 2009–10. This work was integrated into the campaign for the UK Parliamentary general election.

38 Progress indicators provide us with information that helps to target our activities.

39 Data source – ONS, UK Electoral Statistics, 2008.

40 Data source – Ipsos-MORI, December 2009.



## Key activities

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**Identify the barriers and solutions to maintaining complete and accurate registers, to ensure that electoral registration policy and practice is supported by evidence about what works.**

▶ In 2009–10, we carried out research into the completeness and accuracy of electoral registers. Our report *The completeness and accuracy of electoral registers in Great Britain*,<sup>41</sup> published in March 2010, reviewed registration

rates and looked at the factors associated with under-registration. The research found that registration rates appear to have stabilised since 2006, and that non-registration and inaccuracy is associated with certain social groups, particularly young people aged 17–24 years old, and people from black and minority ethnic communities. We also found that people changing address is a significant reason for non-registration. For more information on our register research, see below.



### Capturing trends in voter registration

We undertake a rolling programme of research to understand how and why registers are incomplete or inaccurate and identify how to make improvements. Our 2010 report – *The completeness and accuracy of electoral registers in Great Britain* – provided a snapshot of electoral registers in eight local authorities, as well as using other national data, to give a picture of changing trends in registration in Great Britain.

The report showed that registration rates appear to have stabilised since 2006. However, because estimates indicate a decline in registration levels in the early part of the last decade, the level of non-registration may be higher than the 2001 estimate of 8–9%. We will make a new estimate of the registration level in Great Britain after the 2011 Census.

The research looked in detail at registration levels in the case study areas. We found that non-registration and inaccuracy is associated with

certain social groups, particularly young people aged 17–24 years old (56% not registered in the sample of areas) and people from black and minority ethnic communities (31% not registered). People changing address is a significant reason for non-registration. In the sample areas, just 21% of those living at their present address for a year or less were registered to vote. This indicated that people were not making use of the rolling registration provision after moving home.

We used the findings of the research to make recommendations for Government policy makers and local authorities on how registration levels could be improved in the longer term. These include considering the timing of the annual canvass and reviewing the allocation of funds. We will continue to conduct our own public awareness activity, assess the performance of EROs and support those involved in encouraging registration through guidance and training.

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<sup>41</sup> The Electoral Commission, *The completeness and accuracy of electoral registers in Great Britain*, [www.electoralcommission.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/87111/The-completeness-and-accuracy-of-electoral-registers-in-Great-Britain.pdf](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/87111/The-completeness-and-accuracy-of-electoral-registers-in-Great-Britain.pdf).



## Key activities

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☛ We provide one-to-one support to electoral administrators through a telephone helpline. In 2009–10 we received almost 2,000 calls to this service on topics such as registration and absent voting. ☛

Support Electoral Registration Officers and other key groups by providing guidance and access to appropriate tools and resources to enable them to maintain complete and accurate electoral registers and deliver a well-run electoral registration process which allows electors to register easily and securely.

▶ We published comprehensive guidance for EROs – including updates to the *Managing electoral registration in Great Britain* manual – to support them in carrying out their duties ahead of the UK general election. We provided a range of resources to help EROs plan and conduct the annual canvass. This included guidance, planners, risk logs and presentations for staff training sessions. We also ran seminars before the June 2009 elections.

▶ We provide one-to-one support to electoral administrators through a telephone helpline. We track calls and identify reoccurring issues so we can update our published guidance. In 2009–10 we received almost 2,000 calls to this service on topics such as registration and absent voting.

▶ Electoral administrators are uniquely placed to ensure that the electoral registers are free from fraud. We provide detailed guidance in

our ERO manual on identifying attempted fraud, including suspicious applications for votes, and set out the actions that should be taken when fraud is suspected. See page 29 for more information on electoral fraud.

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**Monitor, highlight and challenge the service delivered to electors by Electoral Registration Officers through our performance standards framework, to improve electoral registration services locally.**

▶ We published our second assessment of performance against our performance standards for EROs in March 2010.

▶ When compared to the first assessment, which took place in April 2009, the second assessment showed some improvement across the standards. However, gaps in ERO performance still remain. Performance was weakest in the participation subject area, in particular ‘public awareness’, where 41% of EROs did not meet the standard. We developed an action plan for improvement to address these weaker areas. In 2009–10, we contacted all under-performing EROs to identify reasons for poor performance and to develop appropriate methods to improve it. We also provided revised guidance and template planning tools. We want to see all EROs meeting the standards for all performance areas. See page 25 for more information.

▶ We would like to see a similar framework of performance standards introduced in Northern Ireland. We worked with the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland to pilot election and registration standards from January to June 2010. The Chief Electoral Officer agreed to gather evidence on elections and registration against which we will assess his performance against our standards. We will verify the information provided to us and identify improvements for the future.



## Key activities

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Review proposals from Government and others for changes to electoral registration law. Deliver evidence-based proposals to improve the legal and administrative framework for electoral registration.

- ▶ We welcomed Parliament's decision to introduce IER in the PPE Act. It places responsibility for registering on individuals rather than one person in a household. This will help to modernise the electoral system and increase the integrity and accuracy of the register.
- ▶ Moving to a system of individual registration will represent a major change to the electoral registration system in Great Britain. The transition to IER needs to be properly resourced and managed to ensure that voters do not fall off the register.
- ▶ In 2009–10, we made clear that the UK Government must ensure that a clear and robust plan is developed for implementing IER. We want to ensure the new system makes it easy for people to register and that EROs and those involved in elections are fully supported to implement changes.
- ▶ IER will involve collecting personal identifiers from voters, such as date of birth and National Insurance number. We conducted research into the best ways of achieving this, including reviewing approaches to producing user-friendly personal identifier collection forms. It is vital that these identifiers are verified before the applicant is added to the register.
- ▶ The PPE Act gives us a key role to play in assessing the success of the move from the current registration system to IER.

“ We welcomed Parliament's decision to introduce individual electoral registration. It places responsibility for registering on individuals rather than one person in a household. ”

- ▶ In October 2009 we responded to the Northern Ireland Office consultation on improving electoral registration procedures in Northern Ireland. We broadly supported the proposed changes set out in the consultation, which included extending our performance standards framework for registration and elections to the work of the Chief Electoral Officer, removing the three-month residency requirement for electoral registration in Northern Ireland, and the Chief Electoral Officer taking responsibility for public awareness activity in respect of registration and elections in Northern Ireland.
- ▶ In February 2010 we submitted our response to the UK Government's consultation on proposed changes to the edited electoral register. Our view was that electoral registers should be used for purposes exclusively related to elections and referendums, while recognising that Parliament has taken the view that there is a wider civic case for their use in relation to the detection and prevention of crime and for credit reference purposes. However, we restated our position that the register should not be made available for direct marketing purposes and our recommendation that the edited register should be abolished.



## Key activities

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▶ The campaign before the June 2009 elections was one of the most successful in our history – 150,000 voter registration forms were ordered from our call centre or downloaded from our website. ▶

**Deliver public information campaigns to increase the proportion of eligible people registered to vote.**

▶ We ran a public information campaign ahead of the June 2009 European Parliamentary and English local elections to encourage voter registration. This included television, press and online advertising, and over 500 pieces of editorial media coverage that reached over 30% of the UK population. The campaign was one of the most successful in our history, with approximately 150,000 voter registration forms being ordered from our call centre or downloaded from our website, [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk).

▶ We also ran campaigns throughout the year targeting under-registered groups, including service personnel and British citizens living abroad.

▶ Through our partnership grants scheme we supported third-sector organisations to promote registration among under-represented groups. These included Operation Black Vote, Leonard Cheshire, Barnardo's, and United Response. 2009–10 was the final year of our partnership grants scheme, which has seen us award grants to 19 organisations of up to £100,000 per year. The programme focused on young people, people with disabilities and people from black and minority ethnic communities. It built understanding of politics and democratic structures within these groups and encouraged voter registration.

▶ We produced guidance and resources for local authorities and community groups to use in their own public awareness work. We distributed almost 2.4 million hard-copy resources through our warehouse and there were over 40,000 downloads from our Do Politics website during 2009–10.



## Improving Electoral Registration Officers' performance

Electoral registers need to be accurate and complete, and EROs play an essential role in ensuring this happens. In 2008 we published 10 performance standards for EROs in England, Scotland and Wales. They were developed to ensure a consistent approach across Great Britain. Prior to the standards, there had been no national monitoring or assessment of local activity.

The standards covered a wide range of duties, including improving the accuracy and integrity of the register and promoting participation. Our first assessment of ERO performance against the standards took place in 2008. In 2009–10 we carried out ERO performance analysis against the standards for the second time.

EROs reported on how well they had performed against the standards, and we verified nearly two-thirds of their returns. We found that there has been some improvement since the first round of assessments across all the standards. Just under 96% of EROs either met or exceeded

all three of the standards relating to 'completeness and accuracy of electoral registration records'. This compares with 85% who met or exceeded all the standards in this area last year.

Gaps in performance remained. Performance against the standards for participation was weak. Four in 10 EROs were not doing enough to promote electoral registration in their local community. There was an improvement in performance for the five standards requiring a documented plan, but there still remains room for further improvement.

During 2009–10, we identified EROs who failed to meet our performance standards and worked with them to drive improvement. We met with these EROs and also held group seminars and briefings for them and their staff. We also revised our guidance and tools to target areas of low performance, to ensure that voters receive the highest quality electoral registration service possible.

**Table 12: Results from assessment of performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers**

Subject area	Performance standard	% EROs performing below the standard	% EROs performing at the standard	% of EROs performing above the standard
Completeness and accuracy of the electoral register	Standard 1: Use of information sources	0.8	38.3	60.9
	Standard 2: Property database	0.0	58.0	42.0
	Standard 3: House-to-house enquiries	4.5	73.6	21.9
Integrity	Standard 4: Integrity	15.3	70.2	14.5
	Standard 5: Supply and security	0.0	35.1	64.9

(Continued overleaf)



## Improving Electoral Registration Officers' performance (cont.)

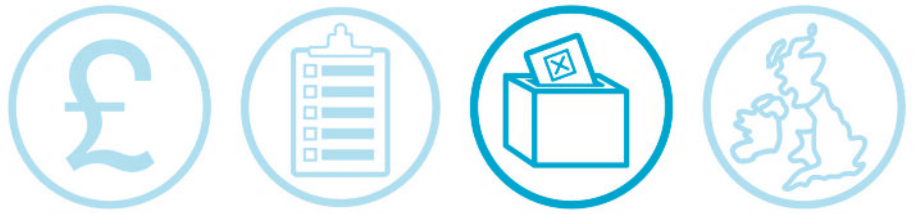
Table 12: Results from assessment of performance standards for Electoral Registration Officers (cont.)

Subject area	Performance standard	% EROs performing below the standard	% EROs performing at the standard	% of EROs performing above the standard
Public awareness	Standard 6: Public awareness	40.9	51.2	7.9
	Standard 7: Working with partners	13.5	69.1	17.4
	Standard 8: Accessibility and communication of information	5.8	81.3	12.9
Planning and organisation	Standard 9: Planning	8.4	78.4	13.2
	Standard 10: Training	1.8	73.4	24.8

## Looking ahead

In 2010–11 we will continue to work to ensure a well-run electoral registration system for the benefit of voters. The implementation of IER will be a priority. Through our research programme we will build upon our understanding of the state of electoral registration across the UK and prepare for the opportunity that the 2011 census will present in gathering valuable data on the electorate. We will continue to use our

performance standards framework to drive improvements in the service that electors receive from their EROs, and will work with the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland to introduce a performance standards framework there. On public awareness, we will continue to push for improved results from our work, while reducing the amount we spend on it.



## Objective 3 – Well-run elections and referendums which produce results that are accepted

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Free and fair elections are vital to democracy. Voters need to feel confident that when they take part in an election, their vote will be secure and the final result will be accurate. The process of casting votes must be as straightforward as possible, and there should be no unnecessary barriers to voting.

Returning Officers (ROs) are responsible for the conduct of elections in the UK. The UK and Scottish Governments are responsible for the legal and funding frameworks that enable ROs to fulfil their responsibilities.

Our role is to monitor performance through our performance standards framework and research programme, to highlight where elections are well run and to challenge both ROs and the Government where the service received by electors needs to be improved. The performance standards framework also provides a valuable tool for ensuring transparency about how ROs carry out their functions.

We continue to review the management of elections, and monitor public confidence in the process and results of elections. We support improvements in elections management, and scrutinise proposals for legal change to ensure voters' interests are put first.

We encourage and support ROs to improve coordination and management capacity, including improving electoral management structures in Great Britain. We have also improved our preparations for successfully managing referendums.

We run public information campaigns before elections and referendums to ensure people have the information they need to vote successfully.



## Key performance indicators

Measure	Target	Performance
Output and outcome measures <sup>42</sup>		
Percentage of electors in Great Britain whose ROs meet or exceed the performance standards relating to a) effective planning, b) integrity and c) participation activities in relation to a well-run election process	New assessment	a) <b>92%</b> (around 41.8m electors out of almost 45.3m) b) <b>85%</b> (38.4m electors) c) <b>78%</b> (35.0m electors)
Percentage of queries from ROs (by telephone/email) acknowledged on first working day and responded to fully within three working days	<b>100%</b>	<b>96%</b> (1,571 out of 1,634 queries)
Percentage of reports on the administration of elections published within 18 weeks of the polling day	<b>100%</b>	<b>67%</b>
Progress indicators		
Percentage of the UK public who say they know how to vote	Improving trend on 2008–9 figure of <b>92%</b>	<b>93%</b> <sup>43</sup>
Percentage of the UK public who are satisfied with the voting experience in the UK	Improving trend on 2008–9 figure of <b>75%</b>	<b>73%</b> <sup>44</sup>

Our first assessment of the performance for ROs against our standards has established a benchmark that we will use to help us to drive improvements in 2010–11. We were slightly beneath our target for responding to enquiries from ROs. Our missed target for reporting on the

administration of elections was due to a decision to delay the report on the European Parliamentary elections so that its publication would coincide with the start of the new Parliamentary session.

<sup>42</sup> Output and outcome measures help us monitor activities that we are either wholly in control of or those that we are able to significantly influence.

<sup>43</sup> Data source – Ipsos-MORI research, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> Data source – Ipsos-MORI research, 2009.



## Key activities

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**Evaluate the way elections are delivered and make recommendations to improve confidence in the effectiveness and integrity of the election process.**

- ▶ Our report into the administration of the June 2009 European Parliamentary and English local elections was published in October 2010. We found the elections were well run and 80% of people were pleased with the process of voting. However, there were problems with the production of ballot papers and postal votes in a relatively small number of areas. In London, for example, the ballot paper was 70 centimetres long and there were concerns that, when folded, elements could be visible, potentially compromising the secrecy of the ballot. We revised our guidance to ROs in light of these findings.
- ▶ We commissioned research into postal voting at the European Parliamentary and English local elections. The findings showed that the rate of postal vote rejection had risen since previous European Parliamentary and local elections. Across all areas, the most common reasons for rejection were mismatched, rather than omitted, dates of birth or signatures. Both of these identifiers are required.
- ▶ The law requires ROs to check at least 20% of all returned postal voting statements, but our research found that for the 2009 elections most ROs followed our guidance and checked 100%. We have again called on the Government to make 100% checking mandatory.
- ▶ We also published reports on the UK Parliamentary by-elections in Norwich North and Glasgow North East. Although the elections went smoothly, our findings led us to make a number of recommendations, including calling for a review of the procedures for calling by-elections so that a UK Parliament seat does not remain vacant for too long.

**For the 2009 elections most Returning Officers followed our guidance and checked 100% of postal voting statements.**

**Support Returning Officers and key stakeholders by providing guidance and access to appropriate tools and resources to enable them to manage elections and referendums efficiently and effectively.**

- ▶ We produced a wide range of resources for the 2009 European Parliamentary and English local elections, including a comprehensive guidance manual for ROs, polling station handbooks and guides on how to deal with doubtful ballot papers. We also provided resources to use when training staff involved in elections.
- ▶ We work with partners including the Association of Chief Police Officers to ensure the risk of electoral malpractice is minimised and appropriate action is taken where necessary. In Great Britain, we produced comprehensive guidance for the police on detecting and dealing with electoral malpractice and published pocket guides on policing elections. We also distributed quick guides to help Royal Mail staff identify signs of electoral fraud.
- ▶ We held round-table events and seminars on preventing and detecting electoral malpractice to set out what police officers and electoral administrators need to do to ensure voters can be confident their vote is safe.
- ▶ We work with the police to develop and maintain a database of allegations of electoral malpractice at elections, and we report on this. At the June 2009 European Parliamentary elections, 15.1 million votes were cast. We found that there were only 58 cases of alleged malpractice recorded, indicating the elections were free from major electoral fraud, and that no election result was challenged on the grounds of malpractice.



## Performance of Returning Officers against our standards

We want voters to feel confident that voting is straightforward and secure wherever they live. We introduced performance standards for the management of elections for ROs in March 2009 and reported against these standards in the autumn, following the 2009 European Parliamentary and English local elections. The standards covered important RO duties, such as planning for elections and ensuring information to voters is accessible so that there are no barriers to voting.

In 2009, over 90% of ROs met seven performance standards. However, a significant number did not have formal plans in place for ensuring the integrity – the safety and security –

of the ballot or for planning and delivering public awareness activities.

We implemented a programme to support ROs to improve their work in weaker areas of performance. We spoke to ROs about preparing for the 2010 UK general election, issued planning templates and provided comprehensive guidance. We will publish our assessment and analysis of ROs' performance at the 2010 UK Parliamentary elections in July 2010.

The table below shows the results of the assessment of performance of ROs against our standards.

**Table 13: Results from assessment of performance standards for Returning Officers**

Subject area	Performance standard	% of ROs performing below the standard	% of ROs performing at the standard	% of ROs performing above the standard
Planning and organisation	Standard 1: Skills and knowledge of the RO	3.2	77.8	19.0
	Standard 2: Planning processes in place for an election	4.8	65.9	29.3
	Standard 3: Training	1.9	78.8	19.3
Integrity	Standard 4: Maintaining the integrity of an election	18.8	75.1	6.1
Participation	Standard 5: Planning and delivering public awareness activity	11.9	70.9	17.2
	Standard 6: Accessibility of information to electors	18.3	74.0	7.7
	Standard 7: Communication of information to candidates and agents	1.3	70.4	28.3



## Key activities

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At the June 2009 European Parliamentary elections in Great Britain, 15.1 million votes were cast. We found that there were only 58 cases of alleged malpractice recorded. 

**Monitor, highlight and challenge the service delivered to electors by Returning Officers through our performance standards framework, to improve electoral administration services locally.**

▶ To help drive improvements in the management of elections we introduced performance standards for ROs in Great Britain. We assessed RO performance against the standards – which cover areas including planning, training and participation – following the June 2009 elections, and identified a number of areas that needed improvement.

▶ We want to see all ROs meeting our performance standards, so we implemented a programme to drive improvement ahead of elections in 2010. We worked with ROs who did not meet all the standards. This included visiting local authorities to verify the information they had provided and agree an action plan to improve performance. We also published revised guidance and produced detailed planning templates.

▶ We are working on implementing a performance standards framework for Northern Ireland. See page 30 for more information on RO performance standards.

**Review proposals from the Government and others for changes to electoral law. Deliver evidence-based proposals to improve the legal and administrative framework for elections.**

▶ Guidance for voters and materials used in voting need to be clear and straightforward. We want to see legislation to support the use of consistently accessible and easy-to-use voter materials. Our *Making your mark* guidance for electoral administrators,<sup>45</sup> published in October 2009, sets out best practice for producing voter materials, within current legislative constraints. We also published guidance for government policy makers to demonstrate how we would like to see voter materials, including ballot papers, produced in the future. See page 33 for more information.

▶ We comment on important issues related to voting and elections. We help shape policy by responding to consultations, which in 2009–10 included:

- The UK Government’s second stage consultation on prisoner voting rights. We confirmed that we did not take a view on which prisoners should or should not be able to vote. However, we recommended that, if enfranchised, any prisoner should as far as possible be treated the same as any other elector.
- The UK Government’s consultation on extending the length of a service voter declaration from three years to five years. While we supported a service declaration period of five years, we argued that five years was probably the upper limit for the length of declaration that would be appropriate under the current registration system.

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<sup>45</sup> The Electoral Commission, *Making your mark*, [www.dopolitics.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/80804/Making-Your-Mark-Design-Guidance-For-Electoral-Administrators.pdf](http://www.dopolitics.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/80804/Making-Your-Mark-Design-Guidance-For-Electoral-Administrators.pdf).



## Key activities

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– The Greater London RO's cost-benefit analysis of manual versus electronic counting at the 2012 Greater London Authority elections. Our response highlighted a number of key principles that should be observed when vote-counting. It also raised concerns about gaps in the Greater London RO's cost-benefit assessment, which we argued could result in the advantages of e-counting being overstated. We called for a more robust cost-benefit analysis and for a number of transparency and other issues to be addressed before any e-counting contract was awarded. We are disappointed that changes do not seem to have been proposed following our response.

▶ We continue to call on the Government to publish an electoral modernisation strategy, which provides a clear, long-term vision of electoral administration in the UK, explains why change is needed, and sets out how the changes involved will be managed. All of this must be developed in a way which recognises the fundamental importance of voters to the proper functioning of our democratic system.

▶ In Scotland, an interim Electoral Management Board, including EROs and ROs across Scotland, was established to support the delivery of the 2009 European Parliamentary elections. The Board played an important role in the successful running of the elections. We would like to see it put on a statutory basis and for the Elections Convener to be given powers to direct local officers. We will continue to make the case to Government on the introduction of regional level coordination, perhaps in the form of Electoral Management Boards, across England and Wales.

“ Our campaign ahead of the June 2009 elections included a phase providing important information on voting. During this phase, there were almost 234,000 visits to our website, [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk). ”

**Deliver public information campaigns in advance of elections and referendums to ensure people have the information they need to be able to vote.**

▶ Our campaign ahead of the June 2009 elections included a phase providing important information on voting, such as polling station opening hours and instructions for completing ballot papers. In Northern Ireland the campaign included information on photographic identification requirements at polling stations. During this phase of the campaign, there were almost 234,000 visits to our website, [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk).



## Making it easy to make your mark

Voter materials used at polling stations – such as notices on how to vote, and the ballot papers themselves – must be as accessible and easy to use as possible. Hard-to-read information notices can act as a barrier to voting, and poorly designed ballot papers can cause confusion, and even bring into question the fairness of the result.

In October 2009 we published *Making your mark* – comprehensive guidance that sets out how electoral administrators can produce user-friendly voter materials within current legislative constraints. The guidance covered the layout of ballot papers, polling station notices and other materials, and provided detailed information on

writing in plain language and producing bilingual materials. We also included practical tools such as a design checklist and example templates to show how materials may look in practice. *Making your mark* is available on our website, [www.dopolitics.org.uk](http://www.dopolitics.org.uk), and we also updated our wider election guidance for ROs and polling station staff.

We would like to see legislation introduced to support clarity and accessibility in voting materials. For this reason, we produced a version of *Making your mark* for government policy makers, setting out the principles of good design that will make for more consistent voter materials.

## Looking ahead

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In 2010–11 we will continue to work to ensure that elections and referendums are run well. Our report into the 2010 UK general and English local elections will provide a valuable opportunity to assess how well the system for managing elections is working and make recommendations for how it could be improved. This will be in addition to the interim report we published in May 2010, which addressed the problems experienced by some people as a result of queues at some polling stations.

Our performance standards framework will of course continue to play a key role in improving the service received by electors. We will also respond to any initiatives of the new UK Government around reform of the electoral system and continue to prepare for a referendum. This will include question assessment and preparing for the role of the Chair of the Commission as Chief Counting Officer.



## Objective 4 – Fair boundary arrangements for elections in England

The process involved in the drawing of electoral boundaries must be open, transparent and free from political bias or influence. Electoral equality, in the sense of each elector having a vote of equal weight in the election of local councillors, is a fundamental democratic principle.

We recognise the importance of setting electoral area boundaries that reflect that principle while also taking account of community identities and interests. Until 31 March 2010 in England, this work was carried out by the Boundary Committee for England; a statutory committee of the Electoral Commission.

In relation to the Committee's recommendations for changes to local government structure and/or administrative boundaries, it reported directly to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government in relation to unitary authorities.

The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 transferred responsibility for setting local government boundaries from the Boundary Committee for England to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE), which began work on 1 April 2010.

### Key performance indicators

Measure	Target	Performance
Output and outcome measures <sup>46</sup>		
Percentage of stakeholders satisfied with the review process	Improving trend on <b>68%</b> (2007–8)	<b>72%</b>
Percentage of reviews started in 2009–10 that are completed within planned timeframes (as set at the start of each review)	Ongoing monitoring	Reviews started in 2009–10 are currently in progress.

The Committee were pleased that they increased the percentage of stakeholders satisfied with the review process. Due to the planned schedules

for reviews started in 2009–10, none were completed within that financial year.

<sup>46</sup> Output and outcome measures help us monitor activities that we are either wholly in control of or those that we are able to significantly influence.



## Key activities

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### **Conduct reviews of local government structure, electoral arrangements and administrative boundaries resulting from the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.**

▶ The Committee's focus for the year was on progressing electoral reviews in the new unitary authorities that were established on 1 April 2009. The Committee concluded its reviews of Cornwall and Northumberland and orders will be laid in Parliament to give effect to these as soon as the process is clarified by the Parliamentary authorities. The Committee's successor, the LGBCE, expects to publish final recommendations for Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, County Durham, Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester by autumn 2010.

▶ In February 2008 the Committee was asked by the UK Government to advise the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on unitary structures of local government for Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk. The Committee published its final advice to the Secretary of State in December 2009. In February 2010, the Minister for Local Government announced the Government's decision to implement original proposals (for unitary Exeter and Norwich authorities on their current boundaries). In Suffolk the Minister concluded that none of the proposals should be implemented and proposed a County Constitutional Convention comprising the principal local authorities in Suffolk and their MPs to reach a consensus on a possible unitary solution. The process followed by the Committee in providing advice to the Secretary of State was extremely demanding and suffered considerable delay due to legal challenges from local authorities in the counties. However, the Committee was satisfied that its advice was informed by the most extensive consultation it had ever undertaken and that its impartiality and independence was explicitly recognised by everyone involved in the process.

▶ The Committee also began electoral reviews of Stoke-on-Trent and Mansfield, ensuring that local people and organisations are given opportunities through consultation to provide evidence that could influence the Committee's decisions.

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### **Conduct electoral reviews of local authorities in which significant electoral imbalances arise.**

▶ The Committee began electoral reviews in Northampton, Sedgemoor, South Derbyshire and West Somerset. All reviews are progressing as scheduled. The LGBCE plans to commence 15 more reviews during the course of 2010–11.

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### **Develop and maintain a two- to three-year programme of electoral and administrative boundary review work, in consultation with local interests.**

▶ The Committee developed a two-year programme of review activity. These reviews are based on requests from local authorities for electoral reviews to provide for single-member wards or divisions, or to reduce council size. In drawing up its programme the Committee also responded to requests for administrative boundary reviews. The bulk of the programme will address the electoral imbalances that have arisen in local authorities since they were last reviewed – it was the Committee's responsibility to undertake an audit of electoral imbalances across England on an annual basis.

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### **Work with the UK Government and the Speaker's Committee to effect the transfer from the Commission of the Boundary Committee review and implementation functions.**

▶ The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act, which received Royal Assent in December 2009, provided for the establishment of the LGBCE. The Boundary Committee and the Electoral



Commission worked closely together to ensure the transition to the new, independent body went smoothly. The LGBCE began its work on 1 April 2010 with working structures in place – including

a budget, corporate plan, new accommodation, and a relationship with the Speaker's Committee.



## The work of the Boundary Committee for England in 2009–10

The Boundary Committee has been a crucial part of the Electoral Commission since 2002 and has delivered a wide and varied programme of work over that time. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 transferred responsibility for setting local government electoral boundaries from the Electoral Commission and the Boundary Committee for England to the LGBCE, which began work on 1 April 2010.

During the last eight years, the Committee's work programme has taken it literally from one end of England to the other, from Cornwall to Northumberland and from Shropshire to Norfolk. The Committee's work has been based on the need for balance: the balance between electoral equality and community identity in its review work, coupled with the administrative balancing of the need to ensure significant consultation periods against extremely tight implementation deadlines.

The structural review process in Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk was extremely demanding and suffered considerable delay for reasons beyond the Boundary Committee's control. Whereas the reviews of the three northern regions in 2003–4 were underpinned by a clear and consistent Government policy objective, some local authorities felt this was not the case with this process.

However, in spite of controversy, court cases and conflict between proponents of different patterns of unitary local government versus the status quo, the Committee was able to present in December 2009 advice for all three counties that was informed by over 20,000 representations from members of the public, and public, private and voluntary organisations throughout the three counties.

In addition, round-table events were held across the counties so that the Committee could get a direct sense not only of what people thought, but why they thought it. And every piece of evidence received was published on the Committee's website. That transparency, impartiality and independence was explicitly recognised by everyone involved in the process; and the Courts, through judicial reviews instigated by local authorities, endorsed the Committee's broad approach to its work.

The Committee has ensured that its processes have evolved since its inception, and that evolution is a product of completing just under 100 electoral reviews since 2002. Since 2004 an extra consultation stage – on council size – has been added to the start of reviews where possible.

More recently, the Committee sought to engage with local authorities and political groups on their rationale for council size, inviting them to challenge accepted norms and think afresh about political management structures and the role of councillors, both inside and outside the council chamber.

The members and staff of the Boundary Committee brought with them from the Local Government Commission for England in 2002 a high level of experience and professionalism, which has been added to over the years. The Committee, through its work on structural reviews, demonstrated its ability and capacity to adapt at short notice to changing workloads and pressures. Throughout, it maintained its independence and integrity, and was widely recognised as an expert body in its field. We feel sure that the LGBCE will build on the Committee's reputation.

# Corporate resources and finance

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Our success and the way in which we manage and deliver our work relies upon the people who work for us; it is through them we are able to achieve change and deliver results.

As at 31 March 2010,<sup>47</sup> the Commission had 166 full-time equivalent staff in post. Of these, 129 staff were based in the London office and the remainder in the Commission's offices in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the English regions outside London. The total pay bill cost for 2009–10 was around £8.8m.

Our largest deployment of staff relates to our work on electoral administration and the regulation of party and election finance.

In 2009–10 we launched our online recruitment facility to make recruitment more efficient and improve the experience for candidates. As well as saving money, the average recruitment exercise was reduced by 10 working days. We redeveloped our corporate induction programme, including a programme for newly appointed managers, internal transfers and returners to work, to enable staff to quickly understand our work and what is expected of them.

We introduced a new corporate learning and development plan to cover key topics required to help deliver our corporate objectives. Staff feedback has shown significant improvements as a result.

We continued to strengthen our commitment to equality and diversity in 2009–10. We successfully retained the two ticks disability symbol, which means we are recognised as an employer that is positive about disabled people and we assessed our employment policies to ensure equal opportunity for all. The results are reflected in our Single Equality Scheme, which is currently out for consultation.

We also successfully supported the transfer of Boundary Committee and associated staff to the new independent Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

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<sup>47</sup> As at 31 March 2009, the Commission had 153 full-time equivalent staff in post against an agreed total of 177 full-time equivalent posts.

## Corporate resources and finance

Table 14: Staff ethnicity as at 31 March 2010

Ethnic group	Number of staff	Percentage of staff	Total UK percentage <sup>48</sup>
Asian or Asian British	7	4.1	4.0
Black or Black British	13	7.6	2.0
Chinese or other ethnic group	1	0.6	0.8
Mixed	3	1.7	1.2
Undisclosed	23	13.4	0.0
White British, Irish and other	125	72.7	92.1

Table 15: Staff gender breakdown as at 31 March 2010

Gender	Number of staff	Percentage of staff	Total UK percentage
Male	79	45.9	49.1
Female	93	54.1	50.9

## Financial summary

The Speaker's Committee has designated the Chief Executive of the Commission as the Accounting Officer. He is responsible for the propriety and regularity of finances, ensuring that proper records are kept, and that assets are safeguarded. He is supported in these responsibilities by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and through a framework of devolved and delegated budget control to Directors and senior managers.

In April 2007, the Speaker's Committee agreed a multi-year, 'cash flat' settlement covering 2007–8 to 2010–11. As the resource funding agreed was the same amount for each year of this four-year period but our costs vary from year to year depending on when elections are scheduled, we have used end year flexibility (EYF) to match resource requirements between years.

<sup>48</sup> Data source – ONS, UK Census, April 2001.

## Corporate resources and finance

Table 16 shows the cost of carrying out our objectives during 2009–10. The figures, taken from our audited accounts which were laid in the House of Commons in July 2010, are available on our website and set out full details of our

financial position and performance. Tables 17, 18 and 19 show the remuneration received by Electoral Commissioners, Members of the Boundary Committee for England and the Executive Team.

**Table 16: Operating costs by strategic objectives**

To promote	2009–10			2008–9		
	Gross expenditure £000	Income £000	Net £000	Gross expenditure £000	Income £000	Net £000
Integrity and transparency of party and election finance (Objective 1)	6,530	(43)	6,487	5,103	(32)	5,071
Complete and accurate electoral registers supported by a well-run electoral registration process (Objective 2)	8,197	0	8,197	6,681	0	6,681
Well-run elections and referendums which produce results that are accepted (Objective 3)	4,590	0	4,590	3,230	0	3,230
Fair boundary arrangements for elections in England (Objective 4)	3,329	0	3,329	3,896	0	3,896
Public understanding of the way our democracy works <sup>49</sup>	–	–	–	3,585	0	3,585
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,646</b>	<b>(43)</b>	<b>22,603</b>	<b>22,495</b>	<b>(32)</b>	<b>22,463</b>

<sup>49</sup> From the start of 2009–10 work under this objective was integrated into Objectives 2 and 3 listed above.

## Corporate resources and finance

The salary and fees paid from the Consolidated Fund to the Electoral Commissioners during 2009–10 were as follows:

Table 17: Commissioners' remuneration		
Name	2009–10 Salary or fees (£)	2008–9 Salary or fees (£)
Jenny Watson (Chair) <sup>50</sup>	100,375	24,125
Max Caller CBE	13,090	15,381
Max Caller CBE (Chair, Boundary Committee for England)	27,809	37,443
Henrietta Campbell CB	24,768	24,888
Tony Hobman (from 19 January 2010)	0 <sup>51</sup>	–
Ian Kelsall OBE DL	13,275	18,812
John McCormick	24,372	23,315
Karamjit Singh CBE (until 18 January 2010)	6,803	14,834

The pension arrangements for Commissioners may be provided for by the House of Commons in a resolution. The only provision that has been made in this way is for the Chair of the Commission.

The fees paid by the Commission to the Deputy Commissioners for the Boundary Committee for England activities during the year were as follows:

Table 18: Deputy Commissioners' remuneration		
Name	2009–10 fees (£)	2008–9 fees (£)
Jane Earl	9,225	18,172
Professor Ron Johnston (until 8 July 2009)	5,668	24,382
Joan Jones CBE	12,831	31,038
Dr Peter Knight CBE	8,910	17,000
Professor Colin Mellors	8,690	21,844

## Corporate resources and finance

Elizabeth Butler was paid fees of £1,818 in 2009–10 for her work as an independent member of the Audit Committee.

The salary paid to members of the Commission’s Executive Team were as follows:

**Table 19: Executive Team’s remuneration**

Name	2009–10 Salary or fees (£)	2009–10 Benefits in kind (£)	2008–9 Salary or fees (£)	2008–9 Benefits in kind (£)
Peter Wardle (Chief Executive)	121,800	0	120,000	0
Clare Ettinghausen (Deputy Chief Executive)	97,856	0	93,996	0
Carolyn Hughes (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)	92,420	0	91,054	0
Lisa Klein (Director of Party and Election Finance)	92,420	0	91,054	0
Stephen Rooney (Director of Communication)	92,420	0	91,054	0
Andrew Scallan (Director of Electoral Administration and Boundaries)	92,420	32,240 <sup>52</sup>	91,054	30,375 <sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> When the 2008–9 Resource Accounts were prepared and audited, the Commission was advised by Xafinity Paymaster that the fees paid from the Consolidated Fund to Jenny Watson (Chair) in 2008–9 were £24,125, as in Table 17. It has now been agreed that the payment was £25,000.

<sup>51</sup> Tony Hobman waived his fees during 2009–10.

<sup>52</sup> Accommodation and travel costs in support of secondment arrangement; Andrew Scallan is employed by Manchester City Council.

## Corporate resources and finance

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### Interests, gifts and hospitality

Commissioners, Members of the Boundary Committee for England, and staff abide by a code of conduct, part of which requires them to declare any interests, and any gifts or hospitality which they have received or offered. The registers are updated periodically and are available at:

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/how-we-are-run/the-commissioners](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/how-we-are-run/the-commissioners) and  
[www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/how-we-are-run/executive-team](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/about-us/how-we-are-run/executive-team).

### Environmental commitment

In 2009, we reduced our carbon emissions from air travel by 41% compared to 2008. As part of our drive to take responsibility for our environmental impact, we offset our flights with Carbon Retirement. This involves buying up carbon permits that would otherwise be used by heavy industries regulated by the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme.

### Freedom of information, Parliamentary questions and complaints

We are accountable to the UK Parliament through the Speaker's Committee. In 2009–10, the spokesman for the Speaker's Committee, Gary Streeter MP (Sir Peter Viggers MP until June 2009), responded to 101 Parliamentary questions.

We are committed to the principles of openness and transparency in public life and we have a duty to provide information to the public. During 2009–10, we responded to 115 requests made under the Freedom of Information Act. We also responded to 21 complaints about the conduct of the Commission.



# Contact us

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## Democracy matters

We are an independent body set up by the UK Parliament. Our aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. We regulate party and election finance and set standards for well-run elections.

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