

Ymateb y Comisiwn Etholiadol i'r Panel Arbenigol ar Ddiwygio Etholiadol - cwestiynau atodol

Y Comisiwn Etholiadol yw'r corff annibynnol sy'n goruchwyllo etholiadau ac yn rheoleiddio cyllid gwleidyddol yn y DU. Rydym yn gweithio i hyrwyddo hyder y cyhoedd yn y broses ddemocrataidd a sicrhau ei huniondeb.

Mae'n bleser gennym allu ymateb i gwestiynau'r Panel ac edrychwn ymlaen at helpu mewn unrhyw ffordd y gallwn yn y dyfodol.

Cwestiwn 3:

A oes tystiolaeth ar y goblygiadau o ran gweinyddu etholiadau sy'n gysylltiedig â gostwng yr isafswm oedran pleidleisio yn yr Alban i 16 oed (ar gyfer Senedd yr Alban ac etholiadau lleol)?

Cafwyd profiad diweddar yn yr Alban o ostwng yr etholfraint i 16 oed, yn gyntaf, fel profiad untro ar gyfer Refferendwm Annibyniaeth yr Alban yn 2014 ac wedyn yn barhaol ar gyfer etholiadau Senedd yr Alban ac etholiadau Cyngor, y naill o 2016 a'r llall o 2017, drwy Ddeddf Etholiadau'r Alban (Gostwng yr Oedran Pleidleisio) 2015.

Deddfwriaeth

Ni chafodd Deddf Etholfraint 2013, a roddodd etholfraint i bobl ifanc 16 ac 17 oed yn Refferendwm Annibyniaeth yr Alban, Gydsyniad Brenhinol tan 7 Awst, sef deufis cyn dechrau canfasiad blynyddol 2013 ym mis Awst 2013.

Er y bu Llywodraeth yr Alban yn cynnal trafodaethau gyda Swyddogion Cofrestru Etholiadol yr Alban er mwyn sicrhau y gellid rhoi'r ddeddfwriaeth ar waith mewn modd amserol, byddem wedi disgwyl i'r ddeddfwriaeth fod mewn grym o leiaf chwe mis cyn y canfasiad blynyddol. Byddai hyn wedi sicrhau bod gan Swyddogion Cofrestru Etholiadol ddigon o amser i gynllunio'r newidiadau a'u rhoi ar waith yn effeithiol ac hefyd wedi sicrhau bod digon o amser ar gael i baratoi mentrau ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd a llythrennedd gwleidyddol, ar lefel genedlaethol ac ar lefel leol.

Cafodd Deddf Etholiadau'r Alban (Gostwng yr Oedran Pleidleisio) 2015 Gydsyniad Brenhinol ar 24 Gorffennaf 2015 a daeth i rym drannoeth. Gan fod hyn ddeufis cyn canfasiad hydref 2015, achosodd rywfaint o heriau gweinyddol, ond roedd gwersi wedi'u dysgu o 2013/14 ac o ganlyniad, roedd y gwaith cynllunio wedi mynd yn ei flaen.

Ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd

Yn gyffredinol, mae ymgyrchoedd ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd wedi'u hanelu at gyrraedd pob pleidleisiwr cymwys, gyda ffocws ar grwpiau a nodir gan ein gwaith ymchwil fel grwpiau sy'n llai tebygol o fod wedi'u cofrestru i bleidleisio, megis myfyrwyr, pobl ifanc, y rheini sydd wedi symud cartref yn ddiweddar a phobl sy'n rhentu eu cartref. Gan fod yr etholfraint yn newid i gynnwys pobl ifanc 16 ac 17 oed, roeddem o'r farn ei bod yn bwysig cynnwys gweithgareddau penodol a oedd yn targedu'r grŵp hwn. Roedd hyn yn cynnwys hysbysebion ar wefannau, cyfryngau cymdeithasol a radio.

Cynhaliwyd ein hymgyrchoedd #ReadyToVote drwy gydol mis Mawrth yn ystod pob blwyddyn etholiad (2016 a 2017) gan anelu at sicrhau bod pob person ifanc 16 ac 17 oed wedi'i gofrestru ac felly 'yn barod i bleidleisio' yn etholiadau Senedd yr Alban ac etholiadau cyngor. Roedd y broses yn cynnwys gwahodd ysgolion, colegau a sefydliadau ieuenctid i gynnal sesiynau cofrestru lle y byddent yn annog pobl ifanc 16 ac 17 oed i wneud cais i gofrestru ar-lein.

Rhoddwyd yr ymgyrch ar waith gyda chefnogaeth Cymdeithas Prif Swyddogion Gweithredol Awdurdodau Lleol, Cymdeithas Aseswyr yr Alban, y Bwrdd Rheoli Etholiadau, Education Scotland, School Leaders Scotland, Colleges Scotland, Cymdeithas Cyfarwyddwyr Addysg yr Alban a Chyfarwyddiaeth Dysgu Llywodraeth yr Alban. Er mwyn helpu cyfranogwyr i gynnal eu sesiynau cofrestru, lluniwyd pecyn adnoddau gennym a oedd yn cynnwys popeth yr oedd ei angen arnynt i gymryd rhan, y ceir manylion amdanynt ar ein gwefan yn: [Scottish Parliament #ReadyToVote toolkit](#).

Lluniwyd pecyn briffio llythrennedd gwleidyddol gennym hefyd a oedd yn cynnig arweiniad a ffynonellau gwybodaeth i ysgolion, colegau, prifysgolion a phob sefydliad arall a oedd yn awyddus i feithrin llythrennedd gwleidyddol ymhlith pobl ifanc.

Ymrwymodd cyfanswm o 282 o ysgolion uwchradd i gynnal ymgyrchoedd cofrestru ym mis Mawrth 2016 a 294 yn 2017, sef mwy nag 80% o'r holl ysgolion uwchradd yn yr Alban.

Costau

Dylai'r Panel Arbenigol hefyd ystyried y goblygiadau ariannol i Gymru mewn perthynas â newid gweinyddol o'r fath. Fel canllaw, mae'r wybodaeth ganlynol yn amlinellu'r costau sy'n gysylltiedig â'r gwaith ychwanegol sy'n rhan o'r broses o roi etholfraint i bobl ifanc 16 ac 17 oed yn yr Alban.

O'r memorandwm ariannol a gyhoeddwyd gyda [Bil Etholiadau'r Alban \(Gostwng oedran pleidleisio\) 2015](#), disgwyliwyd y byddai cyfanswm y costau i Lywodraeth yr Alban rhwng £1,115,000 a £1,365,000, ar draws blynnyddoedd ariannol 2015/16 a 2016/17.

Mewn perthynas ag amcangyfrif cychwynnol y Comisiwn ar gyfer profi ffurflenni gan ddefnyddwyr, amcangyfrifwyd costau o £40,000. Mae'r Comisiwn hefyd yn amcangyfrif y byddai dylunio'r ffurflen (a gwneud unrhyw fân newidiadau angenrheidiol i ffurflenni cysylltiedig eraill, gan gynnwys y Ffurflen Ymholiadau Cartrefi) yn costio £35,000 arall.

Amcangyfrifodd y Comisiwn Etholiadol hefyd wrth gynnal gweithgareddau ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd cyn y refferendwm (y pennwyd cyfanswm cyllideb o £1.6m ar eu cyfer); y byddai angen tua £93,000 i dargedu pleidleiswyr ifancach yn benodol. Awgrymodd y Comisiwn, os bydd angen deunydd penodol wedi'i dargedu at bleidleiswyr ifanc, y byddai ffigur o tua £120,000 yn amcangyfrif priodol ar gyfer y costau ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd ychwanegol ar gyfer etholiadau Senedd yr Alban yn deillio o'r Bil.

Ar sail y wybodaeth a gafwyd gan Swyddogion Cofrestru Etholiadol, amcangyfrifodd Llywodraeth yr Alban y bydd y gwaith hwn yn costio rhwng £250,000 a £300,000 fesul blwyddyn. Amcangyfrifwyd y byddai costau Swyddogion Canlyniadau yn ystod y cam hwnnw yn cynyddu tua £250,000 ar gyfer etholiad Senedd yr Alban neu etholiad cyngor cyffredinol o ganlyniad i ymestyn yr etholfraint.

Cwestiwn 4:

Pa oblygiadau fyddai'n gysylltiedig ag unrhyw gynnig i ostwng yr isafswm oedran pleidleisio o ran cynnal a gweinyddu etholiadau Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru?

Mae'r goblygiadau sy'n gysylltiedig ag unrhyw gynnig i ostwng yr isafswm oedran pleidleisio o ran cynnal a gweinyddu etholiadau Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bellgyrhaeddol. Nodir rhai o'r meysydd allweddol isod. Mae'r Comisiwn Etholiadol yn fwy na pharod i ddarparu rhagor o fanylion ar y meysydd hyn os bydd eu hangen ac i weithio gyda Chynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru i sicrhau cyfnod pontio diogel os caiff yr oedran pleidleisio ei ostwng.

Y gofrestr etholiadol

Mae'r gofrestr etholiadol yn rhestru enwau a chyfeiriadau pawb sydd wedi cofrestru i bleidleisio mewn etholiadau. Defnyddir y gofrestr at ddibenion etholiadol, fel sicrhau mai dim ond pobl gymwys a all bleidleisio. Fe'i defnyddir hefyd at ddibenion cyfyngedig eraill a nodir yn y gyfraith, fel canfod troseddau, galw pobl i wasanaeth rheithgor a gwirio ceisiadau am gredyd.

Mae'n ofynnol i'r Swyddog Cofrestru Etholiadol ym mhob awdurdod lleol gadw'r canlynol:

- cofrestr o etholwyr seneddol;
- cofrestr o etholwyr llywodraeth leol;
- cofrestr o ddinasyddion perthnasol o'r Undeb Ewropeaidd sydd â'r hawl i bleidleisio yn etholiadau Senedd Ewrop;
- cofrestr o'r cymheiriaid hynny sy'n byw y tu allan i'r DU sydd wedi gwneud datganiad i bleidleisio yn etholiadau Senedd Ewrop

Mae'r cofrestri hyn yn cynnwys manylion pawb sydd wedi'u cofrestru i bleidleisio a rhaid eu cyfuno i'r graddau y bo hynny'n ymarferol.

Defnyddir y gofrestr etholwyr llywodraeth leol ar gyfer unrhyw ddigwyddiad pleidleisio ag etholfraint llywodraeth leol, sy'n cynnwys etholiad Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru, etholiadau llywodraeth leol ac etholiadau cynghorau cymuned.

Byddai gostwng yr oedran pleidleisio ar gyfer etholiadau Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn:

- ei gwneud yn ofynnol diwygio'r gofrestr etholwyr llywodraeth leol i ddangos bod pobl ifanc 16 ac 17 oed yn gymwys i bleidleisio.
- ei gwneud yn ofynnol diwygio'r gofrestr etholwyr llywodraeth leol i gynnwys pobl ifanc 15 oed a rhai pobl ifanc 14 oed fel cyrhaeddwyr.
- ei gwneud yn ofynnol i'r gofrestr etholwyr llywodraeth leol nodi'n glir - a) y dyddiad lle y bydd cyrhaeddwr yn dod yn 16 oed ac yn gymwys i bleidleisio yn etholiadau Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru a hefyd b) y dyddiad y bydd yn dod yn 18 oed ac yn gymwys i bleidleisio mewn unrhyw ddigwyddiad pleidleisio arall y defnyddir y gofrestr llywodraeth leol ar ei gyfer.

Byddai hefyd angen ystyried cyfyngu'r wybodaeth sydd ar gael ar y gofrestr am y rheini o dan 16 oed. Yn yr Alban, ni ddylid cynnwys unrhyw wybodaeth am y rheini o dan 16 oed ar unrhyw fersiwn o'r gofrestr a gaiff ei chyhoeddi neu ei rhyddhau fel arall, ac eithrio o dan amgylchiadau cyfyngedig iawn.¹ Gallai Llywodraeth yr Alban gynnig rhagor o wybodaeth am eu rhesymau dros fabwysiadu'r polisi hwn. Gallai ymestyn yr etholfraint hefyd gael effaith ar gyllid pleidiau; er enghraifft, byddai pobl ifanc rhwng 16 a 18 oed yn dod yn gymwys i wneud rhoddion i bleidiau.

Canfasiad blynyddol

¹ Gweler ein Canllawiau ar gyfer Swyddogion Cofrestru Etholiadol Rhan 2: Y Fframwaith Cofrestru paragraff 2.7

Bob blwyddyn, mae'n ofynnol yn ôl y gyfraith i'r Swyddog Cofrestru Etholiadol gynnal canfasiad blynyddol er mwyn canfod enw a chyfeiriad pobl sydd â hawl i gofrestru ond nad ydynt wedi'u cofrestru ar y pryd; a manylion y bobl hynny sydd wedi'u cofrestru ond nad oes ganddynt yr hawl i fod wedi'u cofrestru.

Fel rhan o'r canfasiad hwn, rhaid i'r Swyddog Cofrestru Etholiadol ymweld yn bersonol â'r cartref os na cheir ymateb i'r ffurflen ganfasio (y cyfeirir ati'n gyffredinol fel Ffurflen Ymholiadau Cartrefi). Os bydd y gofrestr yn cynnwys cyrhaeddwy 14 ac 15 oed, yna byddai angen ystyried p'un a oes angen ymweld yn bersonol â'r grŵp hwn o etholwyr. Yn yr Alban, nid oes angen ymweld yn bersonol â phobl ifanc 14 neu 15 oed nad ydynt wedi ymateb ar unrhyw adeg yn ystod y flwyddyn a defnyddir dulliau eraill, megis cysylltu â phobl ifanc o dan 16 oed drwy e-bost.

Yn ogystal â hyn, byddai hefyd angen ystyried sut y byddai'r Swyddog Cofrestru Etholiadol yn ymgysylltu â phlant o dan yr amgylchiadau canlynol:

- plant sy'n derbyn gofal gan yr awdurdod
- plant sy'n cael eu cadw mewn llety diogel
- plant y mae'r cyngor yn darparu llety byw iddynt gan nad oes gan unrhyw un gyfrifoldeb rhiant dros y plentyn, gan fod y plant ar goll neu wedi'i adael, neu am na all yr unigolyn a oedd yn gofalu am y plentyn yn flaenorol ddarparu llety neu ofal addas
- plant y mae'n ofynnol i'r cyngor eu goruchwyllo o dan "ofyniad goruchwyllo" gan banel plant neu siryf
- plant y mae gan y cyngor gyfrifoldebau drostynt o dan orchymyn cyfreithiol, awdurdod neu warrant, a gyhoeddir yn yr Alban gan wrandawriad plant neu siryf, neu, yng ngweddill y DU, gan lys.

Os newidir y rheolau sy'n llywodraethu'r canfasiad blynyddol, byddai angen diwygio deddfwriaeth sylfaenol.

Deddfwriaeth

Rydym yn argymhell y dylai pob deddfwriaeth fod yn glir (naill ai drwy Gydsyniad Brenhinol i ddeddfwriaeth sylfaenol, neu drwy gyflwyno is-ddeddfwriaeth i'w chymeradwyo o leiaf chwe mis cyn bod angen ei rhoi ar waith). Pe gostyngwyd yr etholfraint ar gyfer etholiadau Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru, yna dylid gweithredu'r newid deddfwriaethol angenrheidiol o leiaf 6 mis cyn dechrau'r canfasiad cyn y digwyddiad pleidleisio a drefnwyd. Ar gyfer etholiadau'r Cynulliad yn 2021, byddai hyn yn golygu sicrhau bod y ddeddfwriaeth mewn grym erbyn mis Ionawr 2020 fan bellaf ar gyfer y canfasiad sy'n dechrau ym mis Gorffennaf 2020.

Byddai'r amserlen hon yn rhoi digon o amser i Swyddogion Cofrestru Etholiadol gynllunio'r newidiadau a'u rhoi ar waith yn effeithiol a pharatoi mentrau ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd a llythrennedd gwleidyddol.

Yn ogystal, mae angen i'r amserlen ddeddfwriaethol ganiatáu digon o amser i brofi ffurflenni i Swyddogion Cofrestru Etholiadol eu defnyddio, diweddarau'r cyngor a'r arweiniad a gynigir gennym i Swyddogion Cofrestru Etholiadol a gweinyddwyr etholiadol a chreu ymgyrch ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd a fyddai'n llawn gwybodaeth i bleidleiswyr ifanc.

Adnoddau a chymorth

Hyfforddiant i staff etholiadol

Fel y crybwyllwyd uchod, mae'n ofynnol i'r Swyddog Cofrestru Etholiadol ym mhob awdurdod lleol gadw'r gofrestr etholiadol. Caiff pob Swyddog Cofrestru Etholiadol gymorth gan dîm o staff etholiadol er mwyn cyflawni ei ddyletswyddau statudol. Mae'n bwysig bod pob aelod o staff sy'n ymwneud â'r broses yn deall ei rôl benodol a'r rhwymedigaethau statudol sy'n gysylltiedig â'r gwaith a wna. Ar hyn o bryd, darperir hyfforddiant naill ai gan y Comisiwn Etholiadol, yn fewnol gan awdurdodau lleol neu drwy Gymdeithas y Gweinyddwyr Etholiadol.

Os newidir yr etholfraint, yna bydd angen hyfforddiant priodol ar bob aelod o staff etholiadau er mwyn ymgymryd ag unrhyw swyddogaethau newydd.

Gwasanaeth digidol

Mae gwasanaeth digidol Llywodraeth y DU yn galluogi pobl i wneud cais i gofrestru ar-lein drwy fynd i'r wefan www.gov.uk/cofrestru-i-bleidleisio.

Er mwyn gwneud cais ar-lein, bydd angen i chi ddarparu eich rhif Yswiriant Gwladol. Mae'n bosibl y bydd yn anodd i rai ymgeiswyr o dan 16 oed ddarparu eu rhif YG. Yn yr Alban, nid yw'n ofynnol i ymgeisydd o dan 16 oed ddarparu ei rif Yswiriant Gwladol na rheswm pam na all wneud hynny. Fel arfer, byddai ceisiadau a gyflwynwyd gan bobl ifanc 14 ac 15 oed drwy'r gwasanaeth digidol yn cael eu hanfon i'w dilysu yn erbyn cofnodion DWP. Yn yr Alban, caiff y ceisiadau hyn eu hanfon at y Swyddog Cofrestru Etholiadol i'w dilysu drwy eu cymharu â chofnodion addysg neu ddata lleol eraill.

Felly byddai angen ystyried effaith unrhyw newid ar y gwasanaeth digidol yng Nghymru.

Meddalwedd ar gyfer etholiadau

Mae pob awdurdod lleol yn caffael ei feddalwedd ei hun ar gyfer rheoli etholiadau. Os caiff yr oedran pleidleisio ei ostwng, bydd angen cynnal trafodaethau gyda'r cwmnïau meddalwedd ymhell cyn gweithredu'r newid er mwyn iddynt allu gwneud y newidiadau angenrheidiol i'r feddalwedd a ddarperir ganddynt, a fydd yn hollbwysig er mwyn sicrhau y gall Swyddogion Cofrestru Etholiadol roi'r newid ar waith yn ymarferol.

Ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd

Fel y crybwyllwyd yn flaenorol wrth ymateb i gwestiwn 3, yn gyffredinol, mae ymgyrchoedd ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd wedi'u hanelu at gyrraedd pob pleidleisiwr cymwys, gyda ffocws ar grwpiau a nodir gan ein gwaith ymchwil fel grwpiau sy'n llai tebygol o fod wedi'u cofrestru i bleidleisio, megis myfyrwyr, pobl ifanc, grwpiau pobl dduon a lleiafrifoedd ethnig, y rheini sydd wedi symud cartref yn ddiweddar a phobl sy'n rhentu eu cartref.

Ar gyfer unrhyw newid etholiadol sylweddol, megis newid i'r etholfraint, byddai angen i'r Comisiwn ystyried ei ddull gweithredu mewn perthynas ag ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd yn ofalus, a fyddai'n cynnwys ymgyrch genedlaethol y talwyd amdani a gweithio gyda phartneriaid perthnasol. Byddai hefyd angen i unrhyw ymgyrch gwybodaeth i'r cyhoedd cyn etholiad cyffredinol yng Nghymru ystyried grŵp newydd posibl o bleidleiswyr a fyddai'n cymryd rhan yn yr etholiadau am y tro cyntaf a sut y byddai angen ymdrin â'r gynulleidfa hon. Byddai goblygiadau cost yn gysylltiedig â'r holl waith hwn y byddai angen i Lywodraeth Cymru / Comisiwn y Cynulliad eu hystyried (fel y nodwyd yn y gwaith perthnasol yn yr Alban).

Casgliad

Mae nifer o feysydd sylweddol y mae angen eu hystyried fel rhan o unrhyw benderfyniad i newid yr etholfraint ar gyfer etholiadau yn y dyfodol i Gynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru, a fyddai'n cynnwys cost, ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd, adnoddau a hyfforddiant.

Yr ystyriaeth allweddol o safbwynt y Comisiwn yw y caiff unrhyw newid ei gyflwyno mewn digon o amser. Byddai hyn yn golygu bod angen i wneuthurwyr polisi neu ddeddfwyr sicrhau y caiff unrhyw ddeddfwriaeth yn y dyfodol sy'n ymwneud ag ymestyn yr etholfraint ei chychwyn o leiaf chwe mis cyn dechrau'r canfasiad er mwyn sicrhau y gellir cynllunio'n llawn ac yn effeithiol.

The Electoral Commission's response to the Expert Panel on Electoral Reform – supplementary questions

The Electoral Commission is the independent body which oversees elections and regulates political finance in the UK. We work to promote public confidence in the democratic process and ensure its integrity.

We are pleased to be able to respond to the Panel's questions and look forward to assisting in any way in future where we can.

Question 3:

Is there evidence on the implications for the administration of elections of the reduction in the minimum voting age to 16 in Scotland (for Scottish Parliament and local elections)?

Scotland has had recent experience of reducing the franchise to 16, firstly, as a legislative one off for the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum and then permanently for Scottish Parliament and Council elections from 2016 and 2017 respectively, via the Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Act 2015.

Legislation

The Franchise Act 2013 which enfranchised 16/17 year olds at the Scottish Independence Referendum did not receive Royal Assent until 7 August, two months before the start of the 2013 annual canvass in August 2013.

While the Scottish Government had been talking with Scotland's Electoral Registration Officers in order to ensure the legislation was capable of being implemented in a timely manner, we would have expected the legislation to be in force at least six months before the annual canvass. This would have ensured EROs had sufficient time to plan and effectively implement the changes and would also have made sure that sufficient time was available to prepare public awareness and political literacy initiatives, both at the national and local level.

The Scottish Elections (Reduction of Voting Age) Act 2015 received Royal Assent on 24 July 2015 and commenced the next day. Since this was 2 months before the autumn canvass of 2015 it did cause some administrative challenges, but lessons had been learnt from 2013/14 which meant that planning was advanced.

Public awareness

Public awareness campaigns are generally aimed to reach all eligible voters, with a focus on groups that our research identifies as being less likely to be registered to vote, such as students, young people, those who had recently moved home and people who rent their home. With the change of franchise to include 16/17 year olds, we felt it important to include specific activities targeting this group. This included website, social media and radio advertisements.

Our #ReadyToVote campaigns ran throughout March of each election year (2016 and 2017) and aimed to ensure all 16 and 17 year olds were registered and therefore 'ready to vote' in the Scottish Parliament and council elections. It involved inviting schools, colleges and youth organisations to run registration sessions where they would encourage 16 and 17 year olds to apply to register online.

We delivered the campaign with support from the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, the Scottish Assessors Association, the Electoral Management Board, Education Scotland, School Leaders Scotland, Colleges Scotland, the Association of Directors of Education Scotland and the Scottish Government Learning Directorate. To help participants run their registration sessions we produced a toolkit providing them with everything they needed to get involved, details of which are on our website here: [Scottish Parliament #ReadyToVote toolkit](#).

We also produced a political literacy briefing which provided guidance and information sources to schools, colleges, universities and all other organisations who wished to develop political literacy amongst young people.

In total 282 high schools signed up to hold registration drives in March 2016 and 294 in 2017, which represented more than 80% of all high schools in Scotland.

Costs

The Expert Panel should also consider the financial implications for Wales of an administrative change such as this. As a guide the following outlines the costs associated with the additional work relating to the enfranchisement of 16/17 year olds in Scotland.

From the financial memorandum published with the [Scottish Elections \(Reduction of voting age\) Bill 2015](#), the total of the costs falling on the Scottish Government was expected to be within the range of £1,115,000 to £1,365,000, across the 2015/16 and 2016/17 financial years.

In relation to the Commission's initial estimate for user testing of forms, costs were estimated at £40,000. The Commission also estimate that designing the form (and making any necessary minor changes to other related forms, including the

Household Enquiry Form) would cost a further £35,000.

The Electoral Commission also estimated that in carrying out public awareness activity ahead of the referendum (which had an overall budget of £1.6m); approximately £93,000 would be required to specifically target younger voters. The Commission suggested that, if specific material targeted at young voters is required then, a figure of around £120,000 would be an appropriate estimate for the additional public awareness costs for the Scottish Parliament elections arising from the Bill.

On the basis of information received from EROs, Scottish Government estimated that this work will cost in the region of £250,000 to £300,000 per year. Returning Officer costs at that stage were estimated to increase by around £250,000 at a Scottish Parliament or council general election as a result of the extension of the franchise.

Question 4:

What implications would any reduction in the minimum voting age have for the conduct and administration of National Assembly for Wales elections?

The implications of a reduction in the minimum voting age on the conduct and administration for the National Assembly for elections are wide ranging. Some of the key areas are outlined below. The Electoral Commission is happy to provide further detail on these if required and to work with the National Assembly for Wales to ensure a safe transition if the voting age is lowered.

The electoral register

The electoral register lists the names and addresses of everyone who is registered to vote in elections. The register is used for electoral purposes, such as making sure only eligible people can vote. It is also used for other limited purposes specified in law, such as detecting crime, calling people for jury service, and checking credit applications.

The Electoral Registration Officer in each local authority is required to maintain:

- a register of parliamentary electors;
- a register of local government electors;
- a register of relevant citizens of the European Union entitled to vote at European Parliamentary elections; and
- a register of those peers living outside the UK who have made a declaration to vote at European Parliamentary elections

These registers contain the details of all those who are registered to vote and must be combined as far as is practicable.

The local government register of electors is used for any poll with a local government franchise, which includes the National Assembly for Wales election, local government and community council elections.

A reduction in the voting age for National Assembly for Wales elections would:

- require the register of local government electors to be amended to show 16 and 17 year olds as being eligible to vote.
- require the register of local government electors to be amended to include 15 year olds and some 14 year olds as attainers
- require the register of local government electors to make clear the – a) on date an attainer becomes 16, and eligible to vote in National Assembly for Wales elections and also b) the date they become 18 and eligible to vote at any other poll for which the local government register is used.

Consideration would also need to be given to restricting information available on the register of those aged under 16. In Scotland, no information on those under 16 must be included on any version of the register published or otherwise made available, except in very limited circumstances.² The Scottish Government could advise further on their reasons for adopting this policy.

The extension in the franchise could also have implications for party finance; for example 16-18 year olds would become eligible to make donations to parties.

Annual canvass

Each year the Electoral Registration Officer is required by law to undertake an annual canvass to ascertain the name and address of persons who are entitled to be registered but who currently are not; and the details of those persons who are registered but are not entitled to be.

As part of this canvass, the Electoral Registration Officer must make a personal visit to the household if no response is received to the canvass form (commonly known as the Household Enquiry Form). If the register includes 14 and 15 year old attainers then consideration would need to be given as to whether or not a personal visit to this group of electors is required. In Scotland a personal visit to 14 or 15 year olds,

² See our Guidance for electoral Registration Officers Part 2 : The Registration Framework paragraph 2.7

who have not responded is not required at any time during the year and other mechanisms such as contacting under 16 year olds by email are used.

In addition to this, consideration would also need to be given as to how the Electoral Registration Officer would engage with children who:

- are cared for by the authority
- are being kept in secure accommodation.
- the council is providing living accommodation for because no-one has parental responsibility for the child, the child is lost or abandoned, or the person who had previously been caring for the child cannot provide suitable accommodation or care
- the council is required to supervise under a “supervision requirement” of a children’s panel or a sheriff
- the council has responsibilities for under a legal order, authorisation or warrant, issued in Scotland by a children’s hearing or sheriff, or, in the rest of the UK, by a court.

If changes are to be made to the rules governing the annual canvass, this would require an amendment to primary legislation.

Legislation

We recommend that all legislation should be clear (either by Royal Assent to primary legislation, or by laying secondary legislation) for approval at least six months before it is required to be implemented. If the franchise for National Assembly for Wales elections were lowered, then the necessary legislative change should take place no later than 6 months before the commencement of the canvass prior to the scheduled poll. For the Assembly elections in 2021 this would mean legislation in place no later than January 2020 for the canvass starting in July 2020.

This timescale would give EROs sufficient time to plan and effectively implement the changes and prepare public awareness and political literacy initiatives.

The legislative timeframe also needs to allow sufficient time to test forms for EROs to use, update the advice and guidance we provide to Electoral Registration Officers and electoral administrators and produce a public awareness campaign that would be informative to young voters.

Resources and support

Training for electoral staff

As mentioned above, the Electoral Registration Officer at each local authority is required to maintain the electoral register. Each Electoral Registration Officer is assisted by a team of electoral staff in order to carry out their statutory duties. It is important that all staff involved understand their particular role and the statutory

obligations associated with the work they undertake. Currently training is provided either by the Electoral Commission, in house by local authorities or via the Association of Electoral Administrators.

If there is a change in franchise, then all elections staff will need appropriate training in order to carry out any new functions.

Digital service

The UK Government's digital service enables people to apply to register on-line by accessing the website <https://www.gov.uk/register-to-vote>.

In order to apply on-line you are required to provide your National Insurance number. Some applicants who are under the age of 16 may have difficulty in providing their NI number. In Scotland, there is no requirement for an applicant who is under the age of 16 to provide their National Insurance number, or a reason why they are not able to do so. Applications made by 14 and 15 year olds to register through the digital service would normally be sent for verification against DWP records. In Scotland, these applications are sent to the ERO to verify by checking against education records or other local data.

Consideration therefore would need to be given to the impact on any change to the digital service in Wales.

Software for elections

Each local authority procures its own electoral management software. If the voting age is lowered there will need to be discussions with the software companies well in advance of the change so that they can make the necessary adaptations to the software they provide, which will be of fundamental importance in ensuring that EROs can implement the change in practice.

Public awareness

As previously mentioned in response to question 3, the Electoral Commission's public awareness campaigns are generally aimed to reach all eligible voters, with a focus on groups that our research identifies as being less likely to be registered to vote, such as students, young people, BME groups, those who had recently moved home and people who rent their home.

For any major electoral change, such as a change to the franchise, the Commission would need to carefully consider its approach to public awareness, which would include a paid-for national campaign and working with relevant partners. Any public information campaign ahead of a Welsh general election would also need to consider a potential new group of voters taking part in the elections for the first time and how this audience would need to be addressed. There would be cost implications attached to all of this work which Welsh Government / Assembly Commission would need to consider (as noted in the relevant work in Scotland).

Conclusion

There are a number of significant areas that require consideration as part of any decision to change franchise for future elections to the National Assembly for Wales, which would include cost, public awareness, resources and training.

The key consideration from the Commission's perspective is that any change is introduced in good time. This would mean policy makers or legislators need to ensure that any future legislation concerning the extension of the franchise is commenced at least six months prior to the beginning of the canvass in order to allow for full and effective planning. .