

# Reaching students

## Key considerations

- Young people are less likely to be registered to vote than those in other age-groups
- Around 30% of 18-24 year olds are not registered to vote compared to less than 5% of those aged over 65<sup>1</sup>
- The registration of young people and, in particular, attainers (including 14/15 year olds in Scotland) remains a challenge for EROs
- Registering students can be a more challenging process under IER than it was under the household registration system as universities can no longer act as the 'head of household' and register students in university accommodation collectively
- A number of EROs are liaising with universities in their area to include electoral registration in the student enrolment process to help them to meet these challenges

## Options

- Incorporating electoral registration directly into the student enrolment process
- Sharing student contact information between universities and EROs, enabling students to be targeted directly
- Considering bespoke messaging for students, particularly around campuses and on social media
- Partnering with local schools, universities and community organisations to host registration events
- Using testimonials from students and young people in your communications – young people are more likely to take an action when the information is presented from someone they can relate to

## Potential benefits

- Increased levels of registration from students
- Reduced administrative burden on EROs as the need for canvassing student residencies will be reduced
- More accurate and complete registers

## Experiences of others



### **Bath & North East Somerset Council**

The ERO has worked with the two universities in the city to make voter registration part of the student enrolment process. The higher levels of student registration can be attributed to this partnership activity. This is the same model used by Sheffield University – more information about how they implemented this can be found in the [case study](#) we published in 2016.

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<sup>1</sup> Electoral Commission, [The December 2015 electoral registers in Great Britain: Accuracy and completeness of the registers in Great Britain and the transition to Individual Electoral Registration](#) (July 2016).



### **Cotswold District Council**

The local agricultural university agreed to provide the ERO with a list of new students on campus and their email addresses. The ERO then sent an information email to each student telling them about the electoral registration process which included an explanation of the ability of a student to register at home AND term time addresses if they wished to. The email asked recipients to email back if they did not wish to register.

All students on the list (except those who didn't want to register at their term-time address) were then sent an ITR by email 1 week later. This approach helped to target an under-registered group and avoided unnecessary chasing of those who did not wish to register at their term-time address.



### **Bristol City Council**

The ERO has worked to make voter registration part of the student enrolment process. Bristol are looking to get the university to move the electoral registration process to the middle of the student enrolment process, rather than being at the end, to try to avoid students not fully completing the process.



### **Scottish councils**

The Electoral Commission worked with all 32 Scottish councils on the #ReadyToVote campaign to get 16- and 17-year-olds registered to vote ahead of the Scottish council elections in May 2017. Councils partnered with local schools, universities and community organisations to host registration events for young people. The registration #ReadyToVote messages were also shared on social media to amplify the message through youth-focused partner organisations

## Challenges

- Potential difficulties establishing links with universities and ensuring they engage with the process
- Receiving registration application data for students who do not live in the registration area – this is something that Bath & North East Somerset Council have experienced and which they are now working to resolve
- Universities may potentially charge a fee for the provision of the registration element of their enrolment service

## Resources



Our [example tactics sheets for reaching target audiences](#) contain ideas for targeting and communicating with typically under-registered groups, such as students.

Detailed guidance on reviewing and updating your [public engagement strategy](#) and [registration plan](#) is contained in [Part 1: Planning for the delivery of electoral registration activity](#).

For information on how Sheffield City Council has been encouraging students to register, see the following [case study](#).

## Get in touch

We would very much like to hear from EROs who have implemented innovative approaches to engaging with students in their area, so please get in touch with your [local Commission team](#). Alternatively if you would like speak directly to any of the authorities referenced in this resource, please let us know and we will be happy to help with this.