

electoral administration bulletin

The
Electoral
Commission



Issue 290 (England) – 8 October 2020

May 2021 polls: publication of guidance

We have now updated and republished our [planning guidance for Police Area Returning Officers](#) to support their preparations for the May 2021 polls.

Our guidance for [local government elections](#) and for [combined Police and Crime Commissioner and local government elections](#) was updated ahead of the postponed May 2020 polls. This guidance remains up to date and current.

Similarly our guidance for the [Mayor of London and London Assembly elections](#) was updated ahead of May 2020. Due to the specific nature of the electronic counting process for these elections, Part E of this guidance is still being finalised and will be published in due course. ROs in London will be notified once this is available, but all other parts of the Returning Officer guidance for the May 2021 polls remain up to date.

As per [Bulletin 288](#), this core guidance will continue to be available in its current (non-date specific) format and has not been amended to reflect the specific challenges of COVID-19. Instead we are providing supplementary guidance and resources that reflect the specific requirements of managing the 2021 polls in a COVID-19 secure way. The first piece of supplementary guidance on [planning for the polls](#) has already been published, with further resources to follow covering the key parts of the electoral process such as the management of nominations and absent voting arrangements, as well as the conduct of polling day and the verification and count.

We are also making revisions to some of our existing supporting resources for the above polls. Some of these resources, such as briefing templates and FAQ documents, will be updated to include COVID-19 specific information. We will update you in a future Bulletin when these are available.

Contents

May 2021 polls: publication of guidance

Further information on the publication of guidance and supporting resources for the May 2021 polls.

May 2021 polls: update on our public awareness communications plans

Update on our public awareness plans for the May 2021 polls including three planned phases of activity.

EA Bulletins are issued on a regular basis. They are one of our key channels for communicating with Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers and their staff. Past issues of Bulletins for England, Scotland and Wales are available [here](#). You can also [subscribe to the EA Bulletins](#).

Please [keep us informed](#) of any staff changes within your team. This will help us to keep our mailing lists up-to-date.

We are sending you this newsletter as it contains important information about the Electoral Commission's work which is relevant to you. The newsletter forms part of the Electoral Commission's public task which has its basis in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. We will manage your personal information and contact details in line with the General Data Protection Regulation and UK data protection legislation as outlined in our privacy notice (<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/privacy-notice>)

May 2021 polls: update on our public awareness communications plans

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, you may [unsubscribe](#) at any time.

Further to [Bulletin 288](#), we can now provide you with more information on our public awareness plans for the May 2021 polls and the phased approach we will be taking. This phased approach will enable us to be as responsive as we can be in the current environment, while still supporting our wide range of stakeholders.

Phase one: mid-October to end December 2020

We are currently developing communication resources to support your activity locally, to save you having to create resources and to help ensure consistent messaging. These resources will be designed to communicate that:

- Polling stations will be safe places to vote
- There are a range of voting options
- Those who would prefer to vote by post should apply early

We are aiming to publish the majority of the additional resources by Friday 16 October and we will notify you in a future bulletin when they have been made available. We will provide:

- Template press release covering the messaging described above
- Q&A document to support you in responding to key likely questions, where a common approach across the sector will be helpful
- Posters, web banners and social media images

During this phase, we will also engage with potential partner organisations in civic society, who can provide us with direct routes to reach some of the more vulnerable audiences.

Phase two: January to mid-March 2021

Activity in phase two, which is likely to include press and partnership work, will be developed during phase one and informed by intelligence on:

- the development of the public health situation
- the level of public response to phase one communications

Phase three: mid-March to polling day

We will be running our 'Got 5?' voter registration campaign at this time across England. Advertising will run across major multimedia online and offline channels, with the full strategy to be developed over the coming weeks.

Alongside that, we will be working ever-more closely with partner organisations, including local authorities. Those relationships will be especially key in delivering not only registration messages, but also complex voter information messages which will vary for different demographics and locations. We also plan to provide new stakeholder resources in February for both the voter registration and voter information stages of our campaign.

This will be supported by information on our website and social media channels, as well as press and PR coverage in key areas.

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