

Reaching care home residents

Key considerations

- Residents of care homes are entitled to be registered to vote in the same way as any other eligible residents in a registration area
- EROs must take the same prescribed steps to canvass care homes and issue ITRs as for any other property in their area
- EROs can encounter difficulties with canvassing care homes, ranging from challenges with getting managers to engage with the process to the fact that some residents may not be able to easily provide the identifiers required to submit an application to register
- 4% of people aged over 65 (416,000) are living in care homes in the UK
- One approach that a number of EROs have taken to help them to meet these challenges is to separate care homes from their other canvassing activity and engage with them on an individual basis

Options

Some EROs have found the following options helpful in preparing for their canvassing activity and meeting the challenge of ensuring care home residents are correctly registered:

- Contacting care home managers in advance of the annual canvass to explain exactly what is required, and allowing completion of the information over the phone (**North Somerset District Council**)
- Appointing a small number of experienced canvassers to concentrate solely on care homes in the area (**Arun District Council and Mendip District Council**)
- Tailoring registration materials, within the prescribed framework, to ensure they are most useful to care home staff (**Cornwall Council**)
- Hand delivering all forms and reminders to care homes, ensuring they attempt to engage with a member of staff each time
- Liaising with relevant council departments who are responsible for care homes run by or on behalf of the council and the department responsible for funding any care, to share information relating to details of residents and help improve accuracy and completeness of registers

Considerations for the ERO

- The scale of the challenge in the area – are there a large number of care homes?
- The number of care homes run by or on behalf of the Council and independently – are you able to utilise links with care homes managed by the Council?
- The financial costs / benefits of employing experienced canvassers solely to visit care homes – will it be cost-effective to use a dedicated canvasser to focus solely on working with care homes?
- Working with other departments within the council – are you able to utilise information, data and resources already available in other council departments?

Potential benefits

- Improved canvass response rate, at an earlier stage in the process, from care homes (**Arun District Council and Cornwall Council**)

- Improved provision of national insurance numbers and dates of birth from residents on voter registration forms (**Arun District Council**)

Experiences of others



Arun District Council

Arun appointed two dedicated canvassers with a list of 60 care homes who used tablets to record the information received which speeded up the updating of the register. They also contacted the care home administrators in advance and explained the canvass and registration process which resulted in higher HEF response rates than in previous years and better provision of the information required from residents to register.



Cornwall Council

Cornwall modified their [covering letter](#) to specifically target individual care homes, with each one being addressed to the manager. They also included a 'continuation sheet' with the form so that longer lists of new residents could be included. Cornwall achieved an 88% response rate following their first reminders sent to care homes, which was an improvement on previous years.



Mendip District Council

Mendip utilise an officer who works for another department within the council, and who has experience engaging with residents for other purposes, as a specialist canvasser for engaging with care homes. They have found this to be a very effective way of getting the information they need.

Resources



We have produced [advice for care home staff in England and Wales](#) on supporting residents to register to vote, and similar [advice for care home staff in Scotland](#). We have also produced assisted applications guidance which sets out what one person can do to help another to register. This can be found [here](#) for England and Wales and [here](#) for Scotland.

[Our guidance for running electoral registration](#) provides general guidance to EROs on managing the canvass process.



For information on and examples of utilising existing data sources, see our resource '[Effective use of available data](#)'.

Get in touch

We would very much like to hear about your experiences. 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.