

electoral administration bulletin



Issue 340 (England) – 5 October 2022

Elections Act: guidance update

Following discussions at the AEA Seminar on the implementation of the Elections Act – particularly the voter ID provisions - we wanted to update on our guidance plans to support you in delivering the new measures.

Firstly, further to [Bulletin 337](#), we have updated our [key planning considerations guidance](#) to reflect the detail confirmed since it was published in August, including updates from UK Government on funding. This guidance will remain a living document as further detail emerges, and it now includes a change log. We will also update you on changes through the Bulletin as usual.

Now that the UK Government has confirmed it will lay the secondary legislation covering Voter ID measures in early November, we have been able to progress our plans for the associated guidance. We are taking a phased approach to this, given the scope of the measures and the limited time available, aiming to get you what you need as swiftly as possible in the order you will need it, and to reduce the time between having sight of the final legislation and making guidance available. Our initial focus is on core guidance for EROs to support the Voter Authority Certificate application process. We aim to publish the first sections of this in mid-November, ahead of further guidance, especially in relation to RO planning and polling station processes. We will publish the Polling Station Handbook to our usual timeframes, in February 2023, and will be delivering hard copies to you as usual.

To make core RO guidance for local government elections in England (LGE) easier to access and update, we are moving it to our more accessible html web-based format. We have already implemented this for the whole suite of ERO guidance. This work is almost complete, and we plan to make it live by the end of October. We will confirm in a future bulletin once this work on the LGE core suite is complete. We will continue to move core RO guidance for other polls to web-based content on a rolling-basis, ahead of respective polls.

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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.

Reminder of consultation on draft accessibility guidance for Returning Officers

As set out in [Bulletin 338](#) on 5 September we launched [a consultation on draft guidance for Returning Officers on assistance with voting for persons with disabilities](#).

The Elections Act includes provisions relating to assisting disabled people to vote, and introduces a duty on the Commission to provide guidance for Returning Officers (ROs) on the requirement to provide reasonable equipment to assist voters with disabilities in polling stations. ROs must have regard to this guidance.

The changes made by the Act have provided a timely opportunity to review our existing guidance to help ensure everyone can vote independently and confidently. There should be no barriers to voting for disabled people, and everyone should have the right to vote on their own and in secret.

We are grateful for the feedback we've received to date. The consultation closes on 17 October and we want to hear from as many people as possible. You can respond by filling in [this form](#) or emailing your views to EAConsultation@electoralcommission.org.uk.

Voter ID: public awareness campaign

From May 2023, voters across England will be required to bring photo ID to vote in person in a polling station. A new form of identification, the Voter Authority Certificate, will be introduced as a form of ID for those who do not have another form of eligible ID.

As part of our duty to inform the public about electoral systems, we will be launching a new public awareness campaign in January 2023. Through integrated advertising, partnership work, press activity, organic digital engagement and information on our website, we will raise awareness of the new requirement.

Our audiences have been segmented into two groups based on their communications needs:

- **General public:** need to know they now need ID to vote in elections and, for those in election areas, be reminded to bring it
- **Key groups:** those who are less likely to own eligible photo ID and need additional support and information in adapting to this change

Advertising, press and partnership activity will be used to raise awareness about this change and what it means for the majority of people in England. We will work in partnership with civil society organisations and local authorities to further support key groups, as set out below.

Our voter registration campaign 'Got 5?' will also be live ahead of the registration deadline, so we're thinking critically about how these two essential messages will be deployed ahead of May 2023.

Electoral administrators and local authorities will be key partners for this work, and we wanted to share early information about the

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campaign, what you can expect to see and how you can help raise awareness in your areas.

Public awareness

To balance the fact that not everyone across England will have elections in May 2023 but many are likely to see news coverage about the change, our advertising campaign will follow two phases:

- Phase one: raising awareness of the new requirement to bring ID across England
- Phase two: reminding voters in areas where elections are taking place to bring their ID with them when they vote

We will use a mix of mass media and targeted digital advertising to maximise our reach and impact. Our ads will direct people to the Electoral Commission website to find out more, where we'll be able to provide them with essential information.

Resources

We will be producing print and digital resources with general messages to help amplify the primary messages of the campaign, as well as tailored resources for key groups, set out in the subsequent section.

Resources will include:

- A guide for public-facing staff and volunteers
- A leaflet for voters
- Posters
- Digital resources, including social media graphics and template newsletter and web copy
- Template press resources (including press releases)

All of our resources will be made available on our website and shared through Roll Call – so please do share the [Roll Call sign up link](#) with your colleagues and collaborators.

Working in partnership

Our research has identified the following key groups as those who are likely to need additional support. These groups are also more likely to face significant or compounding barriers in engaging with the new requirement:

- People over 85
- Trans and non-binary people
- Disabled people
- Ethnicities with low ID ownership, including people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities
- Homeless people and those in refuges
- Anonymous voters

We're working closely with civil society organisations to produce tailored communications resources for these audiences. These will include information on what types of ID are eligible, how and where to apply for a voter authority certificate, and what to expect at the polling station.

These resources will also be available alongside the other resources noted above, to support you with communicating with people in these groups in your area.

What's next?

Work is underway to develop communications plans, tools and resources in advance of the campaign going live in January 2023.

We will share more detail on our timings and plans in due course.

If you have any questions or would like to feed views into our developing plans, please contact us at partners@electoralcommission.org.uk.

The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) (Amendment) (England) Rules 2022

In response to a number of queries we have received in recent days, we wanted to provide some information about the planned change to subscriber requirements for some local elections in England.

We have been consulted on draft legislation from the UK government that would reduce the number of subscribing electors required on a candidate nomination paper for elections of councillors of a principal area in England from ten to two. We understand that this legislation is intended to come into effect for scheduled elections and by-elections taking place on or after 4 May 2023.

Once the legislation has been confirmed we will update our guidance to reflect the changes and ensure this is communicated via the EA Bulletin.

2022 canvass: ERO survey

As in previous years, we will once again be requesting information from all EROs, which will help us to build up a picture of how the canvass is progressing. All EROs should have received an email directly last week with [a link to the survey](#).

The information gathered from the survey will support our engagement with you as well as informing our reporting on electoral registration. It will also be used to support the identification and sharing of examples of good practice and to further inform our guidance for EROs. Please complete the survey by no later than Wednesday 12 October.

If you have any questions relating to the survey, please contact your [local Commission team](#).

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