

electoral administration bulletin

The
Electoral
Commission



Issue 366 (England) – 13 September 2023

Report on the May 2023 elections in England

We have today (Wednesday 13 September) published our [report on the May 2023 local elections](#) in England.

This year's elections saw one of the biggest changes to polling station processes for many years with the introduction of voter ID, and this report draws on a wider range of evidence to build on our [June 2023 interim analysis](#). It confirms the interim findings that most people who wanted to vote were able to do so, but that some groups struggled to meet the ID requirement. Our evidence indicates that this stems from two overlapping issues: variations in levels of ownership of accepted ID and in awareness of the new requirement.

We have recommended changes to the UK Government to improve accessibility and support people who do not have accepted ID, and to ensure that good quality data on the impact of voter ID can be collected at future elections. Ahead of next year's scheduled polls, we will work to further improve public awareness of the ID requirement, including the availability of the free Voter Authority Certificate and the types of accepted ID.

These elections also saw increased flexibility as to what support and equipment can be provided at polling stations to enable, or make it easier for, disabled people to vote independently. Voter awareness of what is available continues to be low and we will continue to work with electoral administrators, the media, and civil society organisations to ensure disabled voters receive the support they need.

Concerns remain about the number of candidates experiencing intimidation or harassment, with many telling us they experienced some form of harassment in this election at least once. Coordinated action from partners across the electoral community is needed to ensure candidates and campaigners can participate freely in the democratic process without fear of intimidation.

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Information on and a link to our report on the May 2023 local elections in England, which was published today (13 September).

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Publication of new guidance to support Petition Officers in preparing for and delivering recall petitions.

Elections Act: guidance update

Information on and a link to our updated key considerations guidance.

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

Our report also highlights that significant changes to the process of voting added new layers of complexity and risk to already stretched electoral administration processes. We reiterate concerns that the capacity and resilience of election teams remains a key risk for future elections.

Further significant changes are expected to be implemented ahead of scheduled elections in 2024 and the next UK Parliamentary general election, which must take place by January 2025. Electoral administrators need to be confident that they will have sufficient time and capacity and fully functioning operational resources to support them to deliver these changes. We have made clear that the UK Government must carefully consider whether the necessary time and resources will be available to support administrators before making any final decisions about implementing the remaining Elections Act changes.

You can read our findings and recommendations in full in our [report](#).

We have also published a separate [report on the local elections in Northern Ireland](#). As in England, we found that the polls were well-run, with voters and campaigners reporting high levels of confidence. However, the digital registration number (DRN) continues to be a barrier for some voters, with large numbers of postal and proxy applications being rejected due to missing DRNs. We have also recommended improvements to the count process to support the effective delivery of future elections.

Recall petitions: guidance for Petition Officers

We have now published [guidance for Petition Officers](#) on preparing for and delivering a recall petition.

The guidance builds on the experiences from recall petitions that have taken place to date and covers all stages to be followed as part of the petition process, including: the creation of the petition register; the publication of official petition notices; the designation and setting up of signing places; the daily verification of signing sheets; and the final count of signing sheets.

Elections Act: guidance update

Following the publication of our updated absent voting guidance for EROs, as set out in [Bulletin 365](#), we have also now updated our [key considerations planning guidance](#) to support ROs and EROs with planning for the next phase of Elections Act changes. The update, which is summarised in the change log at the start of the document, relates to dealing with postal or proxy applications requested during the annual canvass and includes links to our updated absent voting guidance.

We will continue to keep this document under review as more information on the changes becomes available, and we will highlight further amendments or additions through the Bulletin.

Should you require any further information, please contact your [local Commission team](#) who will be happy to help.

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The Electoral Commission
3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ
Tel England: 0333 103 1928

infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk

www.electoralcommission.org.uk

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