

# electoral administration bulletin

The  
Electoral  
Commission



Issue 222 (England) – 28 June 2018

## Electoral Commission evaluation of the 2017 canvass pilots

The Electoral Commission has today [published its evaluation](#) of the 2017 canvass pilots.

### Background

Following the introduction of individual electoral registration and online registration, it has become clear that the traditional household canvass, as prescribed by law, has become less efficient and more expensive for Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) to conduct. The Commission has highlighted the risk of continuing with the costly current approach to the canvass at a time when local authority budgets are tight. In July 2016, our assessment of the accuracy and completeness of the registers concluded that the current system is not sustainable in the longer term.

While some form of contact at a household level is likely to remain a key method by which EROs audit their registers, at least in the short to medium-term, there is potential for changes that will improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the annual canvass. Most people do not move address every year, and EROs should not need to spend considerable sums of public money to confirm this.

### The pilots

The UK Government has a programme of work focusing on how to ensure that the electoral registration system can deliver better outcomes for citizens. As part of this programme the Government set up a series of pilot schemes in 2016 and 2017 to test changes to the current annual canvass processes, using provisions in the Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 (ERA Act).

The pilots involved four alternative models to the current canvass:

- Household Notification Letters
- Email canvassing

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Information on and a link to the Commission's evaluation which was published today, Thursday 28 June.

### Electoral registration: guidance update

Information about updates to our guidance for EROs to reflect legislative changes which take effect from 1 July.

### Electoral Commission report on digital campaigning and increasing transparency for voters

Information on and a link to the Commission's report, which was published on Tuesday 26 June.

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

- Telephone canvassing
- Data-led canvassing

The Commission is required to evaluate any pilots run under the ERA Act provisions, and we have now published our evaluation of the 2017 pilots. These pilot schemes have given us important data to help shape the next stage of changes to electoral registration in Great Britain.

## Key findings

We do not think any of the specific pilot models are ready to be put into practice yet. However, the fourth model, using data to allow EROs to target their canvassing activities, has the most potential benefits. Evidence from these pilots shows that this approach could help EROs use their resources more efficiently.

We believe that the Government should focus on developing this approach, and we have identified a number of changes that would make data-led canvassing more effective and practical.

Further details of our recommendations can be found in our [evaluation report](#).

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## Electoral registration: guidance update

As highlighted in [Bulletin 209](#), a number of provisions in the Representation of the People (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 will take effect from 1 July. These provisions make the following changes:

- Broaden the circumstances in which an elector can be deleted from the register based on one piece of evidence that an elector has died.
- Require the subject of a review to be notified of the outcome only if a hearing is requested or a representation is made, and change the right to appeal in certain circumstances.
- No longer require written confirmation to be provided to an elector where they change their open register status.
- Require additional messaging to be included on the voter registration form relating to nationality checks and setting out that failure to provide the required information (including any previous address within the last 12 months) may delay an application to register. As set out in [Bulletin 214](#), the prescribed forms were updated in April to reflect this messaging as part of a series of wider updates to reflect GDPR.

We have updated our [core guidance for EROs](#) to reflect these changes. The change log in each guidance part summarises what has changed and where.

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## Electoral Commission report on digital campaigning and increasing transparency for voters

On Tuesday 26 June, the Electoral Commission [published a report](#)

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>)

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calling for urgent action to be taken by the UK's governments and parliaments, and by social media companies, to improve transparency of the targeting of voters online.

This report, focussed on the subject of digital campaigning, stems from the increasing use of online and targeted digital communications with voters, as well as concerns about recent allegations of misinformation, misuse of personal data, and overseas interference. The Commission's responsibilities include making recommendations about how electoral law might be modernised to reflect changes in campaigning techniques. A range of enquiries undertaken by the Commission have resulted in the package of recommendations announced in the report.

Funding of online campaigning is already covered by the laws on election spending and donations. But the laws need to ensure more clarity about who is spending what, and where and how, and bigger sanctions for those who break the rules.

Key recommendations from the report include:

- The UK's governments should urgently change the law so that online materials produced by parties, candidates and campaigners have an imprint stating who has created them.
- The UK's governments should revise spending return categories so that campaigners are required to provide detailed information about how money has been spent on digital campaigns.
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- Social media companies should label each UK election and referendum advert on their platforms to make the source clear, and deliver their proposals for online databases of political adverts.
- More investigatory powers for the Electoral Commission to obtain information and the ability to impose tougher sanctions.

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

Textphone: 18001 020 7271 0500  
[infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:infoengland@electoralcommission.org.uk)

[www.electoralcommission.org.uk](http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk)

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