

electoral administration bulletin

The
Electoral
Commission

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Issue 224 (England) – 19 July 2018

Electoral Commission evaluation of the May 2018 voter identification pilot schemes

The Electoral Commission has today [published its statutory evaluation](#) of the May 2018 voter identification pilot schemes.

The pilot schemes were set up by the UK Government under the Representation of the People Act 2000 and were run by five different local authorities in England - Bromley, Gosport, Swindon, Watford and Woking. The law requires the Electoral Commission to evaluate and report on any pilot scheme, including on the scheme's 'success or otherwise in facilitating voting at the elections in question'.

Our evaluation found that the pilots worked well, and have provided important initial evidence about how a voter identification requirement in Great Britain might work in practice. When the UK Government invited local councils to run pilot schemes in May 2018, it also said that it was open to looking at piloting in future elections, and so our recommendations address how we think the findings from these pilots should be used to support any future pilot schemes.

Key findings from the pilot areas

Our evaluation involved collecting and analysing a wide range of data and information.

Key findings include:

- 0.6% of people wanted to vote at their polling station but did not have the right identification; many of them came back with the right identification, but 0.2% did not.
- People in areas where the pilot schemes took place were significantly less likely to think that electoral fraud took place than those in other areas where elections were also held in

May 2018.

- Electoral staff successfully ran the pilot schemes in all of the five pilot areas and close to 100% of polling staff also told us they were confident about the process they had to follow in order to check voters' identification.
- Nearly nine out of ten (86%) polling station voters said they were aware beforehand that they had to show identification to vote at their polling station.
- Nearly everyone was able to show the right identification at their polling station, and almost eight in ten (79%) people said the requirement made no difference to whether or not they voted.

Our evaluation identified a number of areas where further work is required, where evidence was not found to disprove concerns or where evidence was inconclusive. This relates particularly to the potential impact on some groups of people who may find it harder than others to show certain types of identification.

Our recommendations

In order to provide the best possible evidence base for any decisions about identification requirements for voters in the future, we recommend the Government should:

- Encourage a wider range of local authorities to run pilot schemes in 2019. These should include a mixture of rural and large urban areas, and areas with different demographic profiles.
- Set out more specifically how pilot schemes in May 2019 should be designed and run. This would help to make sure there is a good range of evidence to test the impact of different options in different parts of England.
- Work with Returning Officers, the Equality and Human Rights Commission and organisations that represent people with different needs to carry out robust equality impact assessments for future pilot schemes.

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