

# Part C – Administering the poll

Police and Crime Commissioner  
elections in England on 5 May 2016:  
guidance for Local Returning Officers

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In this guidance we use 'must' when we refer to a specific legal requirement. We use 'should' for items we consider to be good practice, but which are not legal requirements.

## Translations and other formats

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Tel: 020 7271 0500

Email: [publications@electoralcommission.org.uk](mailto:publications@electoralcommission.org.uk)

## Updates to this document

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# 1 Engaging with candidates and agents

1.1 The Police Area Returning Officer (PARO) is responsible for the nomination process at the election.

1.2 As Local Returning Officer (LRO), you are responsible for the conduct of the poll in your voting area, i.e. your local authority area.



More detailed information on the roles and responsibilities of the LRO and the PARO is contained in [Part A – Roles and responsibilities](#).

1.3 The PARO should ensure that information on the election process and spending is easily available for candidates and agents. You should liaise with the PARO at an early stage to understand their plans for coordinating engagement with candidates and agents and disseminating information to them so that you can reflect this in your own planning as appropriate, and can be prepared to deal with enquiries from candidates and agents at the election.

1.4 You should liaise with the PARO to determine what information on local processes they will require for sharing with candidates and agents and to agree how this information should be disseminated.

1.5 The PARO is responsible for administering the nomination process at the PCC election, and will provide nomination packs to any person who expresses an interest in standing.



Guidance for PAROs on the nomination process at a PCC election can be found on our [website](#).

## Briefings

1.6 You should liaise with the PARO to agree what, if any, local briefings should be provided and what any such briefings should cover, which may include information on your local arrangements, such postal vote issue and openings, polling and the verification and count.

## Providing information on the election processes

1.7 You should liaise with the PARO to ensure that candidates at the PCC election have access to information on local arrangements.

1.8 Local arrangements will include information on the dates, times and venues for the key election processes, including:

- postal vote issue and openings
- polling
- the verification and count

1.9 Whatever method you agree with the PARO for disseminating the information, you should ensure that candidates and agents can easily access all the information they need in order to be able to participate in the election.

## Access needs for candidates

1.10 You should bear in mind that candidates and agents may have specific access needs, and so may need any information or guidance produced in a large-print or other format, such as Braille or audio, or in a language other than English.

## The nominations process

1.11 The PARO is responsible for administering the nominations process at the PCC election.



Guidance for PAROs on the nominations process at the PCC election can be found in chapter 3 of the [Guidance for Police Area Returning Officers](#) on the delivery of key processes.

## 2 Agents at the election

### The election agent

2.1 Each candidate must have an election agent and notice of the appointment must be delivered to the PARO by the latest time for delivery of notices of withdrawal, which is 4pm on the nineteenth working day before the poll (i.e. by 4pm on 7 April 2016).

2.2 Upon notification of an election agent's name and address, the PARO must publish a notice setting out those details and the name of the candidate as soon as possible. The PARO will provide you, as LRO, with a copy of the notice and you must publish that within the voting area. The PARO must update the notice if any agent's appointment is revoked, or an agent dies, with the new agent's details published on a revised version. The PARO must provide you, as LRO, with a copy of any updated notice, which you must publish in your voting area.

### Sub-agents

2.3 Election agents may appoint sub-agents to act for them in any part of the police area. Notification of any sub-agent appointment must be made to the PARO by the fifth working day before the poll (i.e. by 27 April 2016).

2.4 Upon notification of a sub-agent's name and address, the PARO must publish a notice setting out those details, the name of the candidate, and the part of the police area within which the sub-agent is appointed to act, as soon as possible. The PARO will provide you, as LRO, with a copy of the notice and you must publish that within your voting area. The PARO must update the notice if any sub-agent's appointment is revoked, or a sub-agent dies, with the new agent's details published on a revised version. The PARO must provide you, as LRO, with a copy of any updated notice, which you must publish in your voting area.

### Other agents

2.5 Candidates at a PCC election can appoint agents to observe the opening of postal votes, the poll and the verification and count. You are responsible for receiving the notifications of appointment of these agents.



For further details on the role of these agents, see [Part 5: Your right to attend key electoral events](#) of our guidance for candidates and agents at PCC elections

2.6 You must ensure that all appointed agents are given a copy of the relevant secrecy requirements for opening of [postal votes](#), [the poll](#) and [the count](#), which we have published on our website.

## Opening of postal votes

2.7 Postal voting agents are permitted by law to observe the opening of the postal voters' ballot box, the opening of returned postal votes and the checking of signatures and dates of birth provided on returned postal voting statements. You must be given written notice of the name and address of any postal voting agents before the start of any particular session that the agents are seeking to attend. The Commission has developed [a form for the notification of appointment of a postal voting agent](#) for use at the PCC election.

2.8 You must give candidates at least 48 hours' notice of the time and place of any postal vote opening session and the number of agents that may be appointed to attend each opening.

## The poll

2.9 Polling agents are entitled by law to access polling stations for the purpose of detecting personation. They can also observe the procedures to be followed inside a polling station.

2.10 Notification must be given to you in writing of any polling agents that have been appointed by not later than 5 working days before the poll (i.e. by 27 April 2016) for their appointment to be in force for the poll. The Commission has developed a form for the [notification of appointment of a polling agent](#) for use at a PCC election.

2.11 A polling agent can be appointed to a particular polling station or stations, or to all polling stations within the voting area. The same polling agents may be appointed to attend more than one polling station.

2.12 At the PCC election, the total number of polling agents that may attend at any particular polling station is four or such greater number that you decide to allow. The limit applies to each individual polling station, even where there are multiple polling stations in the same building or room. If you decide to allow more than four polling agents to attend a polling station, you must give notice of that higher number. This notice should be published on your website and a copy provided to the candidates and their election agents. A copy of the notice should also be given to the PARO. You can decide to fix different maximum numbers for different polling stations and, if you do so, you should make this clear on the notice you publish.

2.13 If all the candidates together appoint more than the maximum number of polling agents who can attend any polling station you must decide which polling agents may attend by drawing lots for each polling station. Those who

are not selected by the lot are not appointed as polling agents for that particular polling station.

2.14 Only one polling agent for each candidate may be admitted to a polling station at any particular time.

## Count

2.15 Counting agents can be appointed to observe the verification and counting processes relating to the PCC election.

2.16 You must be notified in writing of the appointment of counting agents by not later than 5 working days before the poll (i.e. by 27 April 2016) for their appointment to be in force for the verification and count. The Commission has developed a [form for the notification of appointment of a counting agent](#) for use at a PCC election.

2.17 You must give counting agents who have been appointed notice in writing of the time and place at which the verification and count will begin. You must also give counting agents who have been appointed notice of the time and place at which the count of the second preference votes will begin if required. This notice must state the start time of the second count, which may be as soon as practicable after the first count rather than any fixed time or could be a fixed later time.

2.18 You are permitted by law to limit the number of counting agents. The number that may be appointed by each candidate must be the same and, unless there are special circumstances, must not be less than the number obtained by dividing the number of counting assistants (i.e. those staff counting the ballot papers) by the number of candidates.

2.19 When determining the maximum number of counting agents, each candidate should, as far as possible, be permitted to appoint sufficient numbers of counting agents to enable full and proper scrutiny of the verification and count processes. You should, however, consider any health and safety implications, including fire regulations for the verification and count venue, when deciding on maximum numbers of counting agents.

2.20 When determining the maximum number of counting agents you should also bear in mind that the counting agents for all polls being verified are entitled to attend the verification part of the count.



For details on who can attend the verification and count, see [Part E: Verifying and counting the votes](#).

2.21 Only one of the counting agents for each candidate can be designated to be able to request a recount at the conclusion of the count or any recount. Such designations must be made at the time that the counting agent

appointment is notified to you. The Commission's form for the [notification of the appointment of counting agents](#) makes provision for any such designation to be indicated on the form.

# 3 Production of notices, poll cards and ballot papers

## Production and publication of notices

3.1 You must publish notices by posting them in a conspicuous place within the voting area. This should include local authority offices, noticeboards, libraries and other public buildings. The notice may also be given in such other manner as you think fit.

3.2 In order to ensure that voters can receive the information they need, in an accessible format and within time for them to cast their vote, you should ensure that information on the poll, including the notice of election and the notice of poll, is easily accessible to voters, such as through the local authority's website.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure that information on the poll, including the notice of election and notice of poll, is easily accessible to voters, such as through the local authority website. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to ensure that information on the poll can be easily accessed through the local authority website.



See [Part B: - Planning and Organisation](#) for more general guidance on communicating information to electors.

## Translation and formats of notices

3.3 You must, where you consider it appropriate to do so, ensure that notices are translated or provided in another format. You may produce them:

- in Braille
- in languages other than English
- using graphical representations
- in audio format
- using any other means of making information accessible

3.4 The ballot papers cannot be produced in any other language or format. However, the enlarged copy of the ballot paper to be displayed in polling stations must have the instructions for voters printed at the top of the paper, and these words may be translated into languages other than English.

## Notice of election

3.5 The PARO must publish the notice of election by no later than twenty-five working days before the poll (i.e. by 30 March 2016). The PARO must prepare and send to you a copy of the notice of election, which you must publish locally in the voting area.

## Statement of persons nominated

3.6 The PARO must publish the statement of persons nominated for the police area by 4pm, eighteen working days before the poll (i.e. by 4pm on 8 April 2016). The PARO must prepare and send to you a copy of the statement of persons nominated as soon as it has been published, which you must publish in the voting area as soon as practicable after receiving it.

## Notice of poll

3.7 If the PCC election is contested, the PARO is required to publish a notice of poll for the police area by no later than the sixth working day before poll (i.e. by 26 April 2016). The PARO should provide you with a copy of the notice which you can then publish locally in your voting area. You should also either provide a link from your website to the PARO's website where the notice is published or provide a copy directly on your website so that electors in the voting area can easily access it.

## Notice of the situation of polling stations

3.8 No later than the last date for the publication of the notice of poll (i.e. no later than 26 April 2016), you are required to give public notice of:

- the situation of each polling station in the voting area
- the description of voters entitled to vote there

3.9 You must give a copy of the notice of situation of polling stations and descriptions of voters entitled to vote there to all election agents as soon as practicable after giving the notice, and you should also give a copy to all candidates and any sub-agents. You should be prepared to make these notices available to any accredited observers on request. You should liaise with the PARO on how the provision of the notice of situation of polling stations to agents should be managed in practice, including whether the notices for all voting areas in the police area will be disseminated centrally by the PARO.

# Production of poll cards

3.10 You are responsible for sending electors and their proxies an official poll card for the PCC election. Poll cards must follow the prescribed form.

3.11 You must ensure that on each poll card all of the elements specified in the election rules and shown on the front and the back of the poll cards in the appendix to the election rules are included.

3.12 You will need to dispatch your poll card data to your printers.

3.13 If you are outsourcing the production of poll cards, you should ensure that your software is able to produce a data file that your printers can use to produce the materials to the specification required. At an early stage in discussions with suppliers you should address in what format you will supply the data and in what format they will send you any proofs, and this should be included in your specification and contract.

3.14 You should conduct a test-run by submitting sample data to the printers in advance of 'live' data being submitted. This will also enable pre-proofs to be developed, so that it is clear which part of the data should go where on the poll card.

3.15 You should also liaise with your Royal Mail contact (or other commercial delivery firm) at an early stage to ensure that you have appropriate licences in place and that the poll card meets specific delivery requirements.

3.16 Regardless of whether you have outsourced the production of poll cards you remain responsible for ensuring that they are produced in accordance with the legislation. You should therefore ensure that you have arrangements in place which enable you to quality-assure the whole process.

3.17 In order to ensure that voters receive the information they need you should have in place a process for checking live proofs of poll cards, including those for absent voters, as well as arrangements to check the actual stationery being produced, which will highlight if any of the signed-off proofs have been inadvertently altered. Random spot checks within polling districts could also be carried out so that a representative cross-section can be checked.

3.18 We have produced a [proof checking factsheet](#) which you can use to help you quality assure the whole process.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure you have robust processes in place for ensuring that there are no errors on poll cards. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered you will need to have in place processes for the proof-checking of poll cards.

3.19 EROs must publish two interim election notices of alteration before publishing the final election notice of alteration on the fifth working day before the poll (i.e. 27 April 2016). These notices support the prompt dispatch of poll cards to those electors who have applied to register close to the registration deadline.

3.20 The first interim notice of alteration must be published on the day of the deadline for nominations, which is the nineteenth working day before the poll (i.e. 7 April 2016). The second interim notice must be published between the eighteenth and sixth working day before the poll (i.e. between 8 April 2016 and 26 April 2016 (inclusive)).

3.21 An update of the registration data resulting from each of the notices of alteration should be sent to your printers as soon as practicable to enable the production of poll cards for new electors.



Further information on interim notices is included in [Part 4 – Maintaining the register throughout the year](#) of the Commission’s guidance for EROs.



Further details on the management of contractors and suppliers can be found in [Part B: - Planning and Organisation](#).

3.22 Electoral registration data held by contractors should be destroyed as soon as possible after polling day. If not already included in the contract, a written undertaking should be produced for contractors to sign confirming this. It should state that the contractor understands that information from the full electoral register cannot be disclosed at any time, confirming that they will not disclose data to any unauthorised party and that, after the election, they will return any discs and paper records provided to them and securely destroy any other electronic or paper copies of the data.

## Poll card delivery

3.23 You must send out poll cards as soon as practicable after the publication of the notice of election.

3.24 In order to ensure that voters receive the information they need and within time for them to cast their vote you should ensure that poll cards can be received by voters as soon as possible, so that they have the maximum amount of time to change their registration details or apply for an absent vote.

3.25 You will need to make an assessment of the optimum distribution date for poll cards and should focus on when poll cards can be expected to be received by electors.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure that poll cards can be received by voters as soon as possible so that they have the maximum amount of time to act on the information. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered, you will need to set out information on the method for delivery of poll cards, including an estimation of when poll cards will be delivered.

3.26 Poll cards may be delivered by hand, by post, or by some other method determined by you as the most appropriate.

### **Delivery by hand**

3.27 If you decide to deliver poll cards by hand you should plan for how this will work in practice. You should appoint sufficient staff to ensure that poll cards can be received by voters as soon as possible to maximise the time they have to change their registration details or apply for an absent vote. You should clearly set out in your instructions the last day by which you would expect all poll cards to have been delivered.

3.28 You should also have in place a mechanism for monitoring delivery, with a view to ensuring that poll cards have been delivered across the whole of the voting area and to agreed timeframes. This may include requiring delivery staff to fill in log sheets and having supervisors carry out spot-checks.

### **Delivery by post**

3.29 You may use Royal Mail or any other commercial delivery firm for the delivery of poll cards. If you are delivering poll cards by post, you should liaise with your postal services provider to agree timescales for delivery and obtain any proof of postage that the firm provides.

3.30 You should also have in place a mechanism for monitoring the delivery of poll cards, with a view to ensuring that they have been delivered across the whole of the voting area and to agreed timeframes. If possible, you should have arrangements in place to track deliveries in order to assist with responding to any enquiries from electors.

3.31 Your contingency planning should address how you would issue any poll cards in the event that Royal Mail or the commercial delivery firm you have contracted are unable to deliver the poll cards, for example, due to industrial action.

3.32 A poll card must be sent to the elector's qualifying address or, in the case of a proxy, to the proxy's address as shown in the list of proxies.

3.33 An anonymous elector's poll card must be sent in a covering envelope to the elector's qualifying address or, where a different address has been specified on their registration application, the poll card must be sent to that other address.

# Production of ballot papers

3.34 You are responsible for printing the PCC ballot papers for your voting area unless the PARO gives you notice that they will take on this responsibility. You should liaise with the PARO on the production of the PCC election ballot papers at an early stage.

3.35 The form of the ballot paper is prescribed in the election rules and must be followed precisely. Ballot papers for postal voters and for polling station use must be the same in form, except that the official mark may be different if desired.

3.36 Although the final content of the ballot papers cannot be confirmed until nominations have closed, you will need to confirm the following elements of the ballot papers with the PARO at an early stage:

- colour of the ballot papers
- the 'official mark'
- ballot paper numbers
- unique identifying mark

## Ballot paper colour

3.37 The colour of ballot papers is not prescribed, but the PARO may direct you to use a particular colour.

3.38 Tendered ballot papers must be a different colour to the ordinary ballot papers.

## The 'official mark'

3.39 An appropriate security mark – the 'official mark' – must be added to the ballot paper.

3.40 The PARO may advise or direct you to use a particular official mark, or require that it contain specific features.

3.41 The mark should be distinctive and does not have to be a perforation added at the time of issue of the ballot paper, although stamping instruments may still be used to create a perforating official mark. It could be a printed emblem or mark or a special printing device such as a watermark. It should be capable of being seen on the front of the ballot paper so that it can be seen without having to turn the ballot paper over.

3.42 The official mark can be the same for all ballot papers at the election or different official marks can be used for different purposes at the same election, for example one for postal votes and another for polling station ballot papers. The official mark cannot be re-used for five years for elections to the same police area.

## Ballot paper numbers and the unique identifying mark

3.43 Ballot paper numbers should run consecutively, but do not have to start at '1'.

3.44 The unique identifying mark can be letters and numbers and could be a repeat of the ballot paper number with the addition of a prefix or a suffix. Also, a unique identifying mark can be, but does not have to be, a barcode. It is not the same as the official mark. The PARO may advise or direct you on the form of the unique identifying mark.

3.45 The unique identifying mark:

- should be unique for each ballot paper
- can be re-used at the next poll
- must be printed on the back of the ballot paper

## Candidate details

3.46 The PARO will be able to confirm the candidate details which are to appear on the ballot paper after the close of nominations.

3.47 Candidates must appear on the ballot paper in the order that they are listed in the statement of persons nominated and their names and relevant details must be printed in accordance with the directions for printing.

3.48 You should use the maximum possible sizes of font. To ensure consistency, the same font size should be used for each candidate for each equivalent line.

3.49 You may be provided with a high-resolution copy of the emblem for use in the printing of ballot papers, or you may need to download the emblem from the Commission's website. You should ensure that whatever copy is used is in the same form as the registered emblem.

3.50 The maximum size of an emblem on the ballot paper is two centimetres square. When adding a party emblem to a ballot paper, the shape of the emblem should not be altered. You should ensure that the emblem is in the same form as the registered emblem – for example, do not stretch emblems into square shapes if they are not registered as square images on our website, as this would have the effect of altering their appearance.

## Form of the reverse of the ballot paper

3.51 The form of the reverse of the ballot paper is prescribed and you must ensure that the required information is included on the ballot paper reverse in the specified format. There is no provision to put any hatching or other marks on the back of the ballot paper.

# Printing of ballot papers

3.52 The ballot papers must be printed in accordance with the directions for printing in the appendix to the election rules. You should ensure that you check with your print supplier at an early stage to establish the maximum size of ballot paper that they can print and, if necessary, have contingency arrangements in place in the event that a larger ballot paper is required.

3.53 The printing of ballot papers should begin as soon as possible after the deadline for candidate withdrawals has passed and final proofs have been signed off, and be carried out in accordance with any advice or direction issued by the PARO.

3.54 You should have robust proof-checking processes in place, as well as arrangements to check the ballot papers whilst being printed, which will highlight if any of the signed-off proofs have been inadvertently altered.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure you have robust processes in place for ensuring that there are no errors on the ballot papers. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered, you will need to have in place a process for proof-checking ballot papers, as well as arrangements to check the ballot papers whilst being printed, which will highlight if any of the signed-off proofs have been inadvertently altered

3.55 When proof-checking ballot papers, you should check that:

- every candidate is included on the ballot paper
- every detail on the ballot paper is spelt correctly
- every emblem that has been validly requested has been included beside the correct candidate and matches the party's entry in the Commission's register
- all candidate descriptions have been printed in the line for the correct candidate
- the voting instructions at the top of the ballot paper match the legislative requirements
- the ballot papers have been cut to the correct size

3.56 Once you have received the printed ballot papers, you should carry out a final check before any ballot papers are issued either at a postal vote issuing session or supplied to a polling station. This should be done by checking at least the first and last ballot paper in every book and by checking that the ballot paper numbers in each book or packet run sequentially.



General guidance on the management of contractors and suppliers and on monitoring their work can be found in [Part B: - Planning and organisation](#).

3.57 Careful consideration needs to be given to the number of ballot papers that will need to be printed to allow you to allocate a sufficient number of ballot papers to polling stations and issue postal ballot packs. You should as a minimum base your print-run on 100% turnout of eligible electors. There are significant risks attached to printing ballot papers based on lower turnout levels. For example, if you start running out of ballot papers on polling day it will be more difficult at that stage to print additional ballot papers and send these to the affected polling stations in a timely manner.

3.58 If you decide for any reason not to print, as a minimum, ballot papers based on 100% turnout of eligible electorate, you should carefully assess the risks.

3.59 As part of your risk assessment you should consider:

- the particular context of this poll
- any particular local circumstances
- projected turnout
- any local or national issues which may affect turnout
- whether having a stock of additional ballot papers ready for rapid delivery to polling stations is preferable, in terms of your ability to respond to additional demand, and more cost effective than printing ballot papers on polling day

3.60 You should also take steps to ensure that additional ballot papers can be printed at short notice if required and decide how polling station staff would be briefed should this situation occur. Guidance on the allocation of ballot papers to polling stations can be found in Chapter 4.

## Ballot paper security

3.61 Once the official mark is printed on your ballot papers, they are effectively 'live'. Regardless of whether you have outsourced your printing or are printing in-house, in order to ensure that voters can have confidence in the process, you should ensure the security of ballot papers during production and storage. Your security arrangements should prevent unauthorised access to or use of the ballot papers during all stages of the production process and storage between printing and the poll.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to maintain the secure storage of ballot papers at all times. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered, you will need to have in place arrangements for securely storing ballot papers that prevent unauthorised access to or use of the ballot papers during all stages of the production process and storage between printing and the poll.

## 4 Polling station voting

4.1 We have produced a [polling station handbook](#) which covers in detail the voting procedures and what to expect on polling day.

4.2 The guidance contained in the polling station handbook has not been reproduced here. Instead, this part of our guidance focuses on the preparations you will need to make in advance of polling day.

### Close of poll

4.3 Voters who at 10pm are in their polling station, or in a queue outside their polling station, for the purpose of voting, may apply for a ballot paper.

4.4 Good planning and flexible staffing should minimise the risk of there being queues at polling stations. As part of your planning you should consider where queues may arise and ensure that you have arrangements in place to be able to respond in the event of queues developing. You should ensure that polling station staff are monitoring turnout throughout the day and providing progress reports to polling station inspectors, and that you are kept informed if there is any intelligence that indicates a risk of there being a queue at close of poll at any polling station. However, you still need to be prepared to deal with any queues should they arise. You should also consider involving your police SPOC in planning arrangements to deal with possible queues at the close of poll, so they can assist you with queue management if necessary.



Further guidance on flexible staffing arrangements at polling stations and relevant training of staff so they can carry out each other's roles in as far as the law permits can be found in [Part B: - Planning and Organisation](#).

4.5 The Commission's polling station handbook will set out in detail the processes to be followed at the close of poll, including how to deal with voters held in a queue at 10pm.

### 'Selfies' in polling stations

4.6 The law relating to obtaining information in polling stations and disclosing such information is complex. Given the risk that someone taking a photo inside a polling station may be in breach of the law, whether intentionally or not, our advice is that you should not allow photos to be taken inside polling stations.

4.7 You should ensure that all polling station staff are aware of this guidance. You might also want to consider displaying a notice inside polling stations to make clear that photography of any kind (including photos taken on

mobile phones) is not permitted. You may also want to consider whether you will allow the use of mobile phones at polling stations and whether to have signs explicitly prohibiting the use of mobile phones inside polling stations.

## Setting up polling stations



Guidance on the identification of suitable polling stations can be found in [Part B: - Planning and Organisation](#).

4.8 You should take all necessary steps to ensure that polling stations are laid out with the voter in mind. In particular, the needs of voters with a range of disabilities should be taken into account. The positioning of all of the required furniture and equipment, as well as where all of the notices should be displayed, should be considered, along with the placement of signage within the polling station and external signage.

4.9 You should develop plans for the layout of each of your polling stations which can be used to assist those setting up the polling stations. You should consider voter throughput and flow, including how the voter will move through the voting process from entering to exiting the polling station.

4.10 Whoever is in charge of setting up polling stations should be instructed on how to do so and what the layout should be capable of achieving.

4.11 If polling station staff are not expected to set up polling stations, they should be instructed to check that the polling station has been set up properly, and should have reference to any layout plans you have produced and the polling station set-up checklist in the Commission's polling station handbook when doing so. The polling station handbook also covers the positioning of equipment and display of notices, and provides examples of layouts for both a room where there is one polling station and a room where there is more than one polling station.



To be able to achieve the outcome set out in [performance standard 1](#), you will need to ensure access needs are taken into account when planning for and setting up polling stations and that polling station staff are trained to set-up polling stations in such a way that takes account of voter needs. To demonstrate that the outcome can be delivered, you will need to have made an assessment regarding access needs, identifying any problems and actions taken to remedy these, and provide guidance/training to polling station staff.



Further guidance on training polling station staff can be found in [Part B – Planning and organisation](#).

4.12 Polling station inspector visits can be used to check polling station set-up and to ensure that all notices remain properly displayed throughout polling day.



Further details on the role of polling station inspectors can be found in [Part B: - Planning and Organisation](#).

## Polling station equipment and materials

4.13 You must provide polling stations with certain materials:

- ballot box(es)
- ballot papers (including tendered ballot papers)
- materials to enable voters to mark their ballot papers (in practice, pencils or pens - you may wish to provide a string to attach pencils/pens to the polling booths)
- relevant part of the register
- absent voters lists – postal voters', proxy voters' and postal proxies lists
- form to record the details of electors who have been issued a ballot paper after the correction of a clerical error (which may be appended to the polling station register)
- corresponding number list
- large-print version of the ballot paper
- enlarged hand-held sample copy of the ballot paper
- voting device for use by blind or partially sighted voters
- ballot paper account
- declaration by companions of voters with disabilities
- list of tendered votes
- list of votes marked by the Presiding Officer
- statement of number of votes marked by the Presiding Officer
- list of voters with disabilities assisted by companions
- Guidance for voters ('How to vote at these elections') notice (for display both inside and outside the polling station)
- Instructions for voters notice (to be displayed inside the polling booth)
- polling screens
- packets, with seals, in which to place the items to be returned to you, such as postal ballot papers returned to the polling station, and for packaging the election documentation at the close of poll

4.14 In addition, you should provide:

- a copy of the requirements as to secrecy
- envelopes, with seals, in which to place any ballot papers that have been issued but which the elector has not placed in the ballot box
- form or list to record electors marked as postal voters but who claim not to have applied for one
- notepaper for use by polling station staff
- stationery items as required, e.g. paper clips, drawing pins, adhesive tack, adhesive tape
- plastic sacks for returning stationery and equipment to the verification venue
- envelopes for making up assorted packets

4.15 You should check that all polling station equipment is fit for purpose and that you have a sufficient quantity, particularly in the event of a high turnout.

4.16 You should have prepared your polling station equipment and materials in good time before polling day, for either delivery to polling stations or collection by Presiding Officers.

4.17 As part of your evaluation of the suitability of your polling stations you will already have considered accessibility issues both inside and outside of each of your polling stations. You should ensure that any additional equipment you have identified as required to make the polling station accessible is delivered and set up in good time for the opening of the poll.

4.18 Where a polling station has an induction loop installed, it should be used wherever possible to support the accessibility of the electoral process to voters with hearing loss. Polling station staff would need to be trained on how to use these at the briefing session.

4.19 You must provide a copy of the relevant [secrecy requirements](#) to all polling station staff.

## Allocation of ballot papers

4.20 You must provide each polling station with such number of ballot papers as, in your opinion, may be necessary. If you are not allocating ballot papers for 100% of electors entitled to vote in person at the polling stations careful consideration needs to be given to the number that will be required in each case.

4.21 As part of your consideration, you should consider expected turnout levels. You should assume that the turnout will be not less than the turnout at the last equivalent poll, and should take into account the potential for late engagement and interest in the election, and any local or national issues which may affect turnout.

4.22 If you decide for any reason not to allocate ballot papers to polling stations based on 100% turnout of eligible electorate, you should have plans

in place to ensure that additional ballot papers can be provided to any polling station that may require them in a timely manner and give clear advice to Presiding Officers about how to complete the ballot paper accounts to take account of the additional allocation.

4.23 When allocating ballot papers to polling stations, ensure that the numbers on the ballot papers allocated to each polling station run consecutively in order to avoid any problems with completing the corresponding number list or ballot paper account.

4.24 Tendered ballot papers must also be supplied to Presiding Officers. Tendered ballot papers should be supplied to polling stations in a sealed envelope with instructions stating that the envelope should be opened and the ballot papers within it issued only in prescribed circumstances, and a brief description of those circumstances should also be provided. This can help to avoid tendered ballot papers being issued in error.

4.25 You should take all necessary steps to ensure that all polling station staff understand that there are limited circumstances in which tendered ballot papers can be issued, and are made aware of what these circumstances are and what processes they will be required to follow for issuing them. The circumstances under which tendered ballot papers can be issued and the processes for doing so are covered in the Commission's [polling station handbook](#).



Further guidance on training polling station staff can be found in [Part B: - Planning and Organisation](#).

## Polling station registers and absent voting lists

4.26 You must provide each Presiding Officer with the appropriate part of the register for their polling station and appropriate absent voting lists. Polling station staff should have been trained on the various franchise markers that will appear on the register.

4.27 Polling station registers can be printed once the final election notice of alteration has been published, five working days before polling day (27 April 2016).

4.28 Procedures should be put in place to deal with any necessary amendments to polling station registers and proxy lists after that time resulting from alterations as a result of correcting clerical errors or court decisions on registration appeals and the granting of emergency proxy applications.

4.29 Whether such determinations are made before polling day or on polling day itself, you should have in place a method for communicating the relevant information to Presiding Officers, which may be done orally or in writing.

4.30 Where a clerical error has been rectified and the relevant elector arrives at the polling station and applies for a ballot paper, the Presiding Officer must issue a ballot paper in the usual manner. The Presiding Officer must also make a written record of the elector to whom a ballot paper has been issued following an alteration to the register due to a clerical error. This record should include the elector's name and elector number. To assist Presiding Officers, you should attach an additional sheet to the polling station registers to allow them to record any such amendments.

4.31 Similar processes should also be developed to communicate additions to the proxy voters' list as a result of emergency proxy applications.

4.32 Where a person makes a complaint to polling station staff that suggests that they should be on the electoral register, the Presiding Officer should communicate that representation to the ERO as soon as is practicable. For this to work effectively there will need to be suitable communication systems in place between Presiding Officers and the ERO.

## Corresponding number lists

4.33 There are two types of corresponding number list: one list, which is the list to be used at postal vote issuing sessions, contains the number and unique identifying mark of every ballot paper produced, as well as the elector numbers of postal voters; and another list, which is the one to be used in polling stations, contains the ballot paper numbers and a column to add the elector numbers of voters to whom those ballot papers are issued

4.34 You must prepare and provide a corresponding number list for each polling station. The corresponding number list is a prescribed document that can be found in the appendix to the election rules.

## Packets for postal ballot papers delivered to polling stations

4.35 Postal voters can return their postal vote by hand to any polling station in the voting area.

4.36 Polling station staff should be appropriately briefed to identify which postal votes can be returned to their polling station.



Further details on the training of polling station staff can be found in [Part B: - Planning and Organisation](#).

4.37 You should provide polling stations with packets for received postal votes. The number and style of packets should, as a minimum, be based on returns at the last equivalent poll, and take into account the potential for late

engagement and interest in the election, and any local or national issues which may affect turnout.

4.38 Records of all such packets should be kept so that each one can be accounted for. The packets should be clearly labelled as containing postal votes. The labels should include the name of the polling station and polling station identifier. You should ensure that the packets are capable of being securely sealed. Polling agents are entitled to attach their seal to sealed packets before they are removed from the polling station and must therefore be permitted to do so.

4.39 You should emphasise to Presiding Officers the importance of maintaining the security of postal votes returned to polling stations by instructing them to immediately place any returned postal votes in the packets provided and to ensure that the packets are stored securely throughout the day.

4.40 You should arrange for postal votes to be collected from polling stations throughout the day as this will help to reduce the number that will have to be dealt with after the close of poll. Polling station inspectors can perform this duty. You should ensure that processes are in place to maintain a clear audit trail and to ensure the security of collected postal vote packets while in transit.

## Polling station log

4.41 You should prepare a polling station log for polling station staff to use to record any problems or anomalies. In particular, polling station staff should be advised to use this log to record anything that may help to explain any apparent issues with the ballot paper account at the verification – for example, if a voter has been seen leaving the polling station with a ballot paper. You should consider instructing Presiding Officers to keep the log and ballot paper account together when delivering the ballot papers to the count.

## Polling station notices

4.42 The PARO must prepare and supply you with two notices: 'Guidance for voters' notice and the 'Instructions for voters' notice. The 'Guidance for voters' notice is required to be exhibited inside and outside of the polling station. The 'Instructions for voters' notice is required by law to be exhibited in every polling booth. The contents and format of the notices are prescribed.

## Death of a candidate

4.43 In the event of the death of a candidate during the election period, the procedure to be followed at a PCC election depends on the time when the PARO receives proof of the death of the candidate. It is the time when the PARO receives proof of the candidate's death that is the relevant factor, not the actual time of death.

## Proof of death received before polls open

4.44 If proof of the death of a validly nominated candidate at a contested election is received before the opening of the poll, the notice of poll is countermanded and the poll does not take place. The PARO must hold a new election.

## Proof of death received after polls have opened and before the declaration of result

4.45 If proof of the death of a validly nominated candidate at a contested election is received after the opening of the poll but before the declaration of result, the poll is abandoned and a new election must be held. However, in this case, because the poll will have started, the documentation (i.e. issued and un-issued ballot papers, etc.) must be returned to you and sealed up in the normal way.

4.46 Any postal votes received back must also be sealed in packets and any envelopes not opened at the time of the notification of the death must be sealed in packets unopened.

## New election

4.47 The PARO will set the date of the new election.

