

Effective use of available data

Key considerations

- To help them to meet their duty to take the necessary steps to maintain the register, EROs should check data sources that are available to them to identify potential electors who are not registered and to identify those who may no longer be entitled to be registered at a particular address
- Ease of access to some data sources, for example education records, may depend on the type of authority in which the ERO is based
- EROs in lower-tier authorities in England are legally entitled to access to certain data held by upper-tier authorities for the purposes of electoral registration¹
- Some EROs have shared examples of where they have achieved good outcomes from utilising **existing data sources** to help ensure that their registers are as accurate and complete as possible

Options

Identifying potential electors or household change by:

- Utilising the full range of resident data collected across the council
- Using data held by upper-tier authorities (where applicable)
- Using data sources held externally which EROs are entitled to access

Potential benefits

- Reduced reliance on the canvass to obtain information about potential electors and household change
- Decreased volumes of changes to be recorded and followed up during the canvass
- Can be performed as regularly as the ERO thinks is required so as to be most effective

Challenges

- Where an ERO does not have direct access to information available, for example, gaining access to higher-tier authority data may be practically limited by internal procedures within the authority that holds the data
- Cross-departmental data sharing within the same organisation can present similar challenges
- Ensuring quality of data sources held by others - EROs should assess the data source before use, and [Part 2 – The registration framework](#) provides guidance on assessing data sources

Experiences of others



Canterbury City Council

By engaging the Democratic Services team at Kent County Council, Canterbury found they were able to more easily obtain education, residential care home and citizenship data that resulted in them being able to issue hundreds of ITRs to potential new electors and follow up with them accordingly. All the District Councils within Kent now have similar arrangements in place.

¹ Regulation 35(1), (2)(aa) and (3) of the 2001 Regulations



London Borough of Islington

Islington receive weekly and monthly data reports compiled from a range of the council's data held on residents including new council tax records (around 300 per week) and data collected from the council's 'My eAccount' service for residents. They are then able to automatically match these against their property database and issue ITRs by email where available or by post and then follow up accordingly. This reduces Islington's reliance on household canvassing to identify these residents.



Preston City Council

Preston have found that carrying out data matching against their housing benefit database has been particularly effective in their area and allowed them to identify and reach people and groups who they may not have been able to previously.

Have you thought about?



Data sharing agreement

Consider developing a data sharing agreement to facilitate the secure and timely sharing of data. This should cover the transfer, storage, destruction and security of data.



Your council tax database

In addition to alerting you to the fact that new residents have moved into a property and providing evidence that a property is empty, council tax records can also be used to identify where a single person discount is being claimed but registration records show more than one adult in residence.



What can your EMS do?

As described in the **London Borough of Islington** example, some EMS systems have functionality to automatically cross reference other data sources against your property database and highlight any differences. If you are unsure whether you have this capability or need assistance on how to run it, you can contact your EMS supplier.

Resources



Chapter 2 of [Part 4: Maintaining the register throughout the year](#) provides guidance to EROs on inspecting records including a list of those data sources that may help EROs identify new electors.

Appendix 2 of [Part 4](#) also includes the Information Commissioner's Office full advice on accessing local records.

Get in touch

We would very much like to hear about your experiences of how you obtain and use local data and which data sets are particularly helpful, so please get in touch with your [local Commission team](#). Alternatively if you would like speak directly to any of the authorities referenced in this resource, please let us know and we will be happy to help with this.