

May 2021 Elections Webinar 1
30th March

Voting and Polling Day

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May 2021 Elections: Voting and Polling Day

The Electoral Commission



Charlene Hannon — Head of Guidance
The Electoral Commission

BALLOT BOX

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Guidance for Returning Officers

All supplementary guidance developed with the expert advice of Public Health England, Scotland and Wales, and in consultation with our working group of administrators, the AEA, Solace, SAA, LGA, Cabinet Office and Scottish and Welsh Governments

As well as updating and publishing our [core guidance](#), from September to December 2020 we released 5 new pieces of supplementary guidance to support administrators with preparing for and delivering the polls against the backdrop of the coronavirus pandemic. The guidance covers:

- Planning considerations
- Absent voting
- Nominations
- Polling stations (including updated polling station handbooks)
- Verification and count

All supplementary guidance can be [found on our website](#)

Polling stations - overview

[Supplementary guidance](#) published December 2020

Polling station handbooks published March 2021:

[GLA](#)

[LGE CAM](#)

[LGE PCC](#)

[PCC](#)

[Scottish Parliament](#)

[Senedd PCC](#)

Supplementary guidance covers:

- Communication with voters, candidates and agents
- Staffing considerations for polling stations
- Additional equipment to support public health considerations
- How to set up and manage polling stations safely

Updated versions of our Polling Station Handbook have been published to support polls across GB

Polling stations - communication

Communication resources are available on our [democratic engagement webpages](#) and the videos via our [YouTube channel](#)

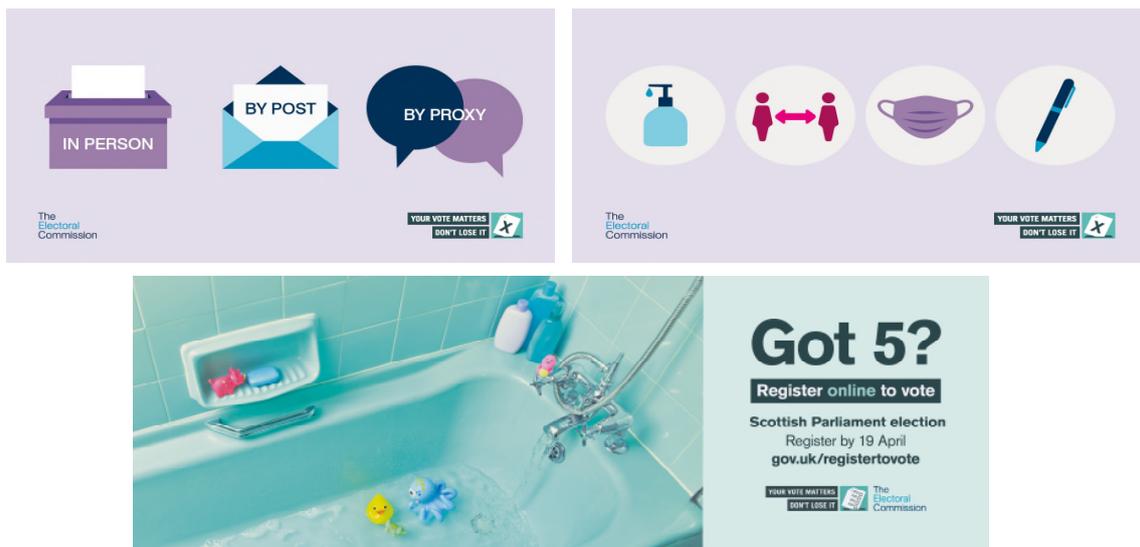
Voters:

- Important to communicate what to expect when voting in person, detailing the health and safety measures that will be in place
- The Commission has produced a range of template communication resources to help ROs raise awareness that polling stations will be safe places to vote
- Includes social media templates and an FAQ resource and animated videos for the public that explain 'How to Vote' and 'What to expect at the polling station'.
- Commission public awareness campaigns went live on 9 March 2021 – includes our 'Got 5' campaign to support voter registration
- There will be additional information publicised via social media and other channels in the run-up to the polls – such as encouraging voters to bring their own pencils/pens and face coverings to polling stations

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Example voter communication resources



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Polling stations - communication

Supplementary
guidance for
candidates and
agents published
March 2021

[England](#)

[Wales](#)

[Scotland](#)

Candidates and agents:

- Important to communicate what health and safety arrangements have been put in place, and how the process of voting in person at polling stations will work in practice
- To support ROs, the Commission has produced resources such as template briefings for candidates and agents to help ensure all those who want to participate in the polls are aware of how polling stations will operate
- The Commission also produced a supplementary guide for candidates and agents to ensure that they understand what to expect at all stages of the electoral process, and are able to support voters appropriately

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Polling stations – staffing and set-up

Further information
on staffing and
venues also
covered in
[supplementary
planning guidance](#)

Staffing:

- Roles required to support the safe management of polling stations, and to support voters in complying with health and safety measures

Set-up/layout

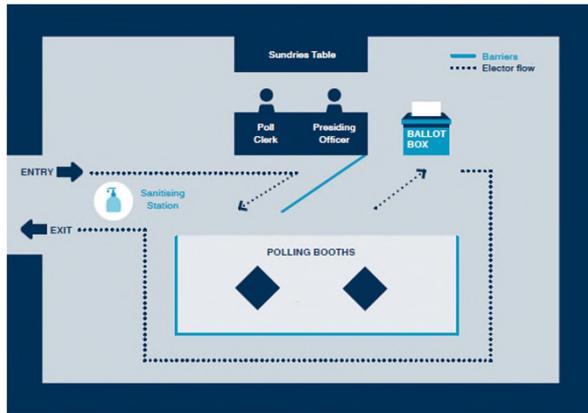
- To support the safe management of polling stations, public health bodies across GB have provided advice on what measures should be in place
- Polling stations will operate with one-way systems wherever possible, and ventilation will be maximised through having doors and windows open
- Additional equipment will be needed such as floor markings, signage, hand-sanitiser, spare face coverings
- Example layouts can be found in the polling station handbook

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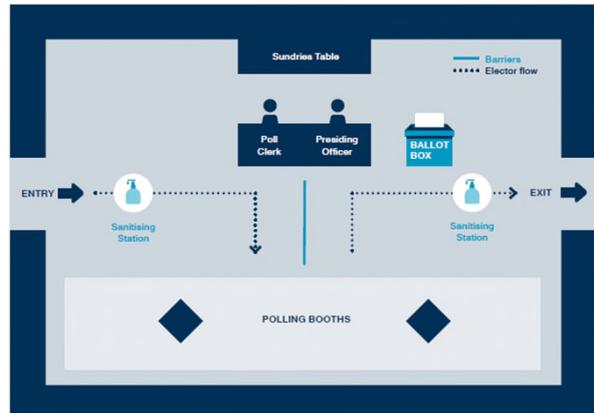
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Polling stations – sample layouts

Single door layout



Separate entrance and exit layout



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Pleased to answer any questions at the end of the session



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Voting & Polling Day

Hugh Peart
Director of Legal & Governance
Returning Officer
London Borough of Harrow

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Before

- EC Guidance
- Election law not changed except emergency proxies
- Covid no excuse
- Covid is H&S risk to RO – criminal – reduce to 'lowest reasonably practicable level'
- Risk assessment of polling stations, postal vote opening, ballot box check-in, count etc
- PPE, screens, gloves, etc
- Employee Assessment – exemption re mask
- Testing & vaccination
- Contingency staffing

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Polling Day

- Clean – before during & after?
- Numbers in stations
- Who is entitled to be present e.g. personation, attach seal
- Queues
- Symptomatic staff & voters
- Voters & masks
- Polling station inspectors as risk assessment monitors – changing masks e.g.
- Emergency proxies

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Close of Poll

- Queues
- Cleaning & bio waste
- Postal votes
- Ballot box check in
- Checking BPAs

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Voting and Polling Day Absent Voting May 2021 Elections

Mark Heath

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Communications Generally

- Communications (including media management)
- The normal **and** more.....
- Messaging starts now...
- Linked to legal duty to encourage participation
- ECs media campaign, templates etc

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- Local campaign- emulate ECs
 - Reassurance messages about voting options
 - polling stations will be safe but some venues may change, wear a mask, bring a pencil, be prepared to queue etc
 - counting may take more time so results may come slower
 - You can vote by post
 - Also proxy options...

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Public Awareness

- Legal duty to take steps the RO thinks appropriate to encourage participation
- Target audiences
- Objectives and success measures
- Risks
- Resources (ECs Campaign materials)

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Communication issues / points

- Status of Guidance from EC
- Why important for May 2021?
- Key messaging?
- “The safest method of voting in the PV”
- Emergency proxy

- Absent vote applications
 - Deadlines and process for all options
- Producing and issuing postal votes
 - Capacity
 - Deadlines
 - Supplier issues (printer, RM)



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- Spoilt postal votes
 - Capacity
 - Safe process
 - Postal vote opening
 - Capacity
 - Safe process
 - Rights of access

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- Emergency proxies
 - Normal emergency proxies
 - “Covid Proxy”

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Section 46 Electoral Administration Act 2006

(1) A returning officer for an election to which this section applies may take such steps as he thinks appropriate to remedy any act or omission on his part, or on the part of a relevant person, which—

- a) arises in connection with any function the returning officer or relevant person has in relation to the election, and
- b) is not in accordance with the rules or any other requirements applicable to the election.

(2) But a returning officer may not under subsection (1) re-count the votes given at an election after the result has been declared.

(3) This section applies to—

- a) a parliamentary election;
- b) a local government election in England and Wales (within the meaning of the 1983 Act).

(4) These are the relevant persons—

- a) an electoral registration officer;
- b) a presiding officer;
- c) a person providing goods or services to the returning officer;
- d) a deputy of any person mentioned in paragraph (a) to (c) or a person appointed to assist, or in the course of his employment assisting, such a person in connection with any function he has in relation to the election.

- **NOTE: Similar formulation for PCCs in The Police and Crime Commissioner Elections (Functions of Returning Officers) Regulations 2012 (Reg 6)**

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