



Cabinet Office

The
Electoral
Commission

Individual Electoral Registration: Update

A Guide for Members
December 2014

IER: the transition

In 2014 one of the most significant changes in electoral administration for almost 100 years took place when Individual Electoral Registration (IER) was introduced on 10 June in England and Wales and 19 September in Scotland.

Eligible members of the public now need to register to vote individually, whereas under the previous system a 'head of household' completed a registration form on behalf of all members of the household.

This change has been consulted upon widely, extensively debated in Parliament, and is supported by all main political parties and non-party bodies concerned with the running of elections, as well as the Information Commissioner.

IER has been designed to help tackle the perception of electoral fraud and improve confidence in our democracy. It is a modernised system, fit for the 21st century, which will help improve the accuracy and completeness of electoral registers.

IER gives people more control and ownership over the process. The new system helps to verify that everyone on the register is who they say they are.

For the first time, people can make their application to register by using a quick, easy and secure online facility. It takes as little as three minutes to apply online – electors simply need to provide their name, address, date of birth and National Insurance number. To date, over four million people have applied to register under IER.

YOUR VOTE MATTERS

MAKE SURE YOU'RE IN



How IER works

New applications to register must now be made individually, either online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote or via your local Electoral Registration Office.

Earlier this year registered electors' details were checked against existing government records during the Confirmation Live Run (CLR). Almost nine in ten electors in Great Britain were automatically transferred to the new register without having to do anything.

Those that did not transfer automatically have been invited to register, sent reminders and canvassed in person to encourage them to apply.

Anybody who was registered during the last canvass before the introduction of IER will retain their vote for the 2015 General Election whether or not they were confirmed on the new registers during CLR. The criteria for remaining on the register has not changed as a result of IER.

The next phase

We are still in the middle of the transition to IER - the next key stages include:

- **December 2014:** revised registers published across England and Wales.
- **February/March 2015:** revised Scottish registers will be published.
- **February 2015:** the Electoral Commission will report on the progress of the transition to IER in England and Wales (a report on progress in Scotland will follow in April).
- **Early February:** the Electoral Commission will begin its digital advertising as part of the General Election campaign. This is followed by the roll out of the publicity campaign across other channels in mid-March.
- **March 2015:** local authorities will receive their funding notifications. The Cabinet Office is currently consulting with authorities regarding funding for 2015/16. All authorities will receive funding in April 2015.

Key statistics (Dec 2014)

Over **4 million** applications since go live, two thirds through the Register to Vote website

Over **90%** customer satisfaction with online service



December registers

The revised registers published in December present the first formal milestone in the public domain since IER was introduced. They provide a snapshot of the IER transition and are now being used by Electoral Registration Officers (ERO) to inform their plans for targeting individuals that are not yet registered. Every ERO faces different challenges and we would caution against drawing conclusions based on the December registers before any detailed analysis to understand the overall picture across the country has been completed.

More work is needed to ensure the electoral registers are as accurate and complete as possible before the May 2015 polls.

Maximising registration

To date £4.2 million has been allocated amongst all local authorities and five national organisations to help maximise registration among under-registered groups of electors, such as students, frequent home movers, private renters and overseas electors.

Supporting student registration

We have been working to raise the profile of electoral registration among students. In early 2013 we established the Student Forum: this brings together electoral teams from local authorities with significant student populations, the Cabinet Office, the Electoral Commission and some key representatives from the Higher and Further Education sectors (Universities UK, ARC, the Association of Colleges, GuildHE and the National Union of Students). A number of practical steps have been agreed to encourage students to register.

Maximising registration funding was weighted towards those areas with substantial student populations, with the aim of increasing numbers of students on the electoral register.

Greg Clark MP, Minister of State, wrote to university Vice Chancellors asking them to support local authorities in their efforts to maximise the number of student registrations.

We are also exploring further measures to increase student registration ahead of the General Election, including looking at emerging evidence from pilots undertaken in Sheffield and Manchester which tested integrating electoral registration with University enrolment.



IER questions

How will IER affect electors at the General Election?

- Anyone who applied to be included on the register in the last canvass before the introduction of IER, but did not transfer to the new register automatically and has not provided the additional information required to confirm their registration under IER, will nevertheless be **carried forward** to the new register. These individuals will remain on the register but will not be able to vote by post or proxy and will need to vote in person at their allocated polling station in the 2015 General Election.
- No one who applied to go on to the register during the last canvass before IER was introduced will be removed unless an ERO has clear evidence that they have moved house or are no longer eligible to vote.
- The Electoral Commission will be conducting a publicity campaign focusing on increasing registration, particularly amongst under registered groups, in preparation for the General Election in May 2015.

Will electors be added immediately to the new register?

- Applications to register to vote take time to process. This is due to a number of factors, including: the need to check application details against existing government records; councils needing to compare details against locally held data; and the statutory 5 day objection period which local authorities must allow for before making an addition to the register.

Can electors still use postal and proxy vote?

- Anyone wishing to vote by post or proxy at the 2015 General Election will have to be registered under IER. Existing postal and proxy voters have been notified by their local electoral registration office that they were either successfully transferred to the new register or that they needed to provide additional information to retain their postal or proxy vote.



IER questions continued

Will overseas voters be able to register with IER?

- Yes. All eligible British citizens living overseas are encouraged to register to vote – they can do so at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote and the Electoral Commission will be running a campaign to target them in the run up to the election. The overseas voting process has also been improved by extending the electoral timetable for UK Parliamentary elections allowing postal votes to be sent out earlier.

How is IER being funded?

- The Government is fully funding the cost of IER, including the cost of transition to local authorities. We are in consultation with local authorities about funding allocations for 2015/16, which will be paid in April 2015.

Is the IER system safe?

- The IER Digital Service was developed and delivered according to government best practice for Information Security. It is subject to regular and robust 'health checks' and is accredited by an independent Information Assurance Accreditor.

What support can electoral registration teams get?

- The Cabinet Office has a team of Regional Delivery Managers and County Leads who work closely with EROs and their teams to ensure councils get the right support during the transition to IER. The Electoral Commission also continues to be available to provide guidance and support to EROs and their staff.

Find out more

For you and your council

If you want an update on IER please contact your Regional Delivery Manager or the Cabinet Office at erodelivery@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk.

For electors

The Electoral Commission is supporting your Electoral Registration Teams with a range of resources. Your council knows its electors best and has been given Government funding to support local communications campaigns. Individuals can apply to register by visiting www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

