The Association of Electoral Administrators

Supplementary templates: Use of voter ID data on and after polling day

1.1 The Electoral Commission (EC) have recently published a guidance note for ROs and EROs on the use of voter ID data on and after polling day.

1.2 They previously published a data collection spreadsheet to enable you to collate the information you are required to return to them via their portal by Friday, 12 May 2023.

1.3 The spreadsheet has since been updated to capture all figures required for press releases including additional contextual information and associated percentages.

1.4 We have provided a template operations note and press release (see Appendix A & Appendix B). The operations note can be shared ahead of 4 May polls to manage expectations about when voter ID data will be made available. The press release can be issued after the 4 May providing the data and contextualised information the EC suggest can be shared publicly.

Additional points

Information that can be shared

1.5 The EC guidance states the following figures should be shared:

- The number of polling station electors who applied for, but were not issued with, a ballot paper (calculated as the total of data recorded in sections 4a and 5a on the VIDEFs); and
- The number of polling station electors who were not issued with a ballot paper and who later returned with accepted ID and were issued with a ballot paper (calculated as the total of data recorded in sections 4d and 5e on the VIDEFs)

1.6 We believe you should include the number of polling station electors who applied for but were not issued with a ballot paper by

close of poll.[1] This reflects the total number of electors who were unable to vote in a polling station on 4 May.

1.7 Further narrative reflecting how many electors were initially refused a ballot paper and how many electors were refused but returned and were able to vote can subsequently be provided.

Information that cannot be shared

1.8 For the avoidance of doubt the following information **cannot be released, shared, inspected, or published**:

- Information from the Ballot Paper Refusal Lists (BPRL) – BPRLs are sealed at close of poll and can only be opened by the ERO to disclose information to a particular elector or proxy who was refused a ballot paper, or by a court order.
- The anonymised, collated data from the VIDEFs (which can only be shared with the Secretary of State and the EC).

Use of greeters

1.9 The EC state you should avoid sharing information that has been recorded by greeters in polling stations. This data may be useful to inform your own evaluation and planning for future polls but is unlikely to give an accurate representation of the experience of voters and may be misleading.

1.10 We strongly agree that data collected by greeters should not be shared publicly as it is unlikely to provide a true reflection of the number of voters who did not vote or who came back to vote.

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests

1.11 It is considered good practice to be transparent and provide the information requested by an FOI, however, the ERO/RO is under no legal obligation to do so and can refuse any such request for information held by them if they wish.

[1] Obtained by **subtracting** the total number of polling station electors who were not issued with a ballot paper and who later returned with accepted ID and were issued with a ballot **from** the total number of polling station electors who applied for were not issued with a ballot paper.

1.12 It is likely you will receive FOI requests requesting information contained on the VIDEF.

1.13 The ERO will receive the VIDEF and VIDEF notes sheet from the RO.

1.14 The VIDEF notes sheet captures evaluation data during polling day which is then summarised onto the VIDEF at the close of poll. The VIDEF notes sheet must be destroyed by the ERO on receipt to anonymise the data contained on the VIDEF.

1.15 The physical VIDEF for each polling station can also be destroyed once the data has been transferred to a spreadsheet. Only the data from the VIDEF needs to be retained for ten years not the actual form itself. However, you may choose to keep the physical forms, provided there is no personal information on them.

1.16 As previously stated, the two sets of anonymised data the ERO is required to collate from the VIDEF and send to the Secretary of State and the EC must not be published or otherwise shared by the ERO or RO. Therefore, anonymised collated data is not FOIable.

1.17 However, based on advice from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, data from the VIDEF, once anonymised but not collated (i.e., still at polling station level), is not protected by the non-disclosure clause and is FOIable.

1.18 If greeters are collecting information at polling stations, you should decide whether you would release any information they have collected if requested under FOI (as such data is not protected by the non-disclosure clause). If you would disclose information, we would recommend considering exactly what data greeters will collect and how you would quality assure its accuracy.

Appendix A – Template operations note for candidate/agents and media ahead of 4 May polls to manage expectations of when voter ID data will be available

Voter ID data from 4 May polls – information we plan to release and when

Following Electoral Commission guidance, the *insert council/area name* Returning Officer plans to release voter ID data for 4 May polls by *insert achievable date of choice agreed with your Returning Officer and elections manager - 12 May 2023 is the deadline for submitting data to the Electoral Commission so all collation and checks should be complete by that date at the latest*.

The data will include the total number of electors who went to vote at a polling station but were not issued a ballot paper by the close of poll.

We will also supply the total number of electors who were not initially issued a ballot paper in a polling station, but then came back with accepted ID and were able to vote.

Contextualised information about the total number of electors who were eligible to vote in person on 4 May and the number of ballot papers issued in polling stations will also be provided.

For councils using paper Voter Identification Evaluation Forms

If you do not plan on releasing information immediately, include It will not be possible to release voter ID data immediately after the close of poll. This is because:

- Elector turnout numbers are only available once all ballot boxes are returned, and all ballot papers verified.
- The priority after the close of poll will be verifying and counting votes.
- Paper forms are being used to collect voter ID information, so time is needed to collate and quality assure information from every polling station

For councils using electronic Voter Identification Evaluation Forms

If you do not plan on releasing information immediately, include It will not be possible to release voter ID data immediately after the close of poll:

- Although we are using electronic methods to collect voter ID data, data still needs to be collated and checked.
- Elector turnout numbers will only be available once all ballot boxes have been returned and all ballot papers verified.

- The priority after the close of poll will be verifying and counting votes.

We will not release any data during polling hours as it would be incomplete. Electors may return to the polling station and be able to vote after initially being turned away.

We would caution against using or sharing anecdotal evidence from external parties as fact during or after polling day, as this will not be a full and accurate picture.

Once available, voter ID data will be published on our website and sent directly to key stakeholders including candidates and agents, and the media. National figures will be collated and released in due course by the Electoral Commission.

Appendix B – Template press release of 4 May voter ID data

Data released today by *insert council area name* shows the number of people who brought ID to the polling station for local elections on 4 May.

The data shows that *insert figure 7 from data for publication spreadsheet*% of electors voting in *insert area name* polling stations brought photo ID that met newly introduced voter ID requirements.

Collated figures across the area show *insert figure 5 from data for publication spreadsheet* electors voted at our *insert total number of polling stations* polling stations on 4 May.

At the end of polling day, *insert figure 3 from data for publication spreadsheet* electors who tried to vote in a polling station were not given a ballot paper because they did not meet the new voter ID requirements – *insert figure 8 from data for publication spreadsheet*%.

The figures also show while *insert figure 1 from data for publication spreadsheet* electors were initially turned away, *insert figure 2 from data for publication spreadsheet* returned with acceptable ID and were able to vote. This means *insert figure 10 from data for publication spreadsheet*% of those initially turned away returned and were issued with a ballot paper.

Additional points you may want to cover for a Returning Officer quote, in other paragraphs or notes to editors:

- *You may want to include the number of electors refused a ballot paper as a percentage of your entire turnout to include postal voters in the total.*
- *You may want to include the total turnout for your area, including postal ballot papers.*
- *Link to any ward level data if this is being made available.*
- *Disappointing to turn any elector away but must comply with new regulations introduced for polls from 4 May.*
- *Carried out extensive local work to raise awareness of the need to bring photo ID to vote in person, including x,y and z.*
- *Electoral Commission also ran national advertising campaign*
- *Will continue to work on awareness raising throughout the year, as all elections and referendums require photo ID from now on.*

- *Anyone without an accepted form of photo ID can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate online, by post or in person – add contact details.*
- *Thank you to the polling station staff who worked so hard on supporting the biggest change to the way we vote in decades.*
- *Full results from 4 May elections are available at insert link*.
- *The Electoral Commission is collecting data from all local authorities across England who held elections on 4 May. It will publish an initial assessment of the voter ID requirement in June and a full evaluation of the local elections in autumn.*