

# The Association of Electoral Administrators



## Member Support Project - proactively recruiting polling station staff

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Electoral administrators have traditionally relied on recruiting polling station staff from their database of experienced staff, or from within their council workforce.
- 1.2 In recent years, members have reported increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining polling station staff in many authorities.
- 1.3 The [Elections Act 2022](#) will bring further challenges to polling station staffing. It imposes additional responsibilities on polling station staff, potentially making the job less attractive. It is also likely more staff will need to be recruited to help with a lengthened voting process.
- 1.4 This document suggests proactive steps you can take to help recruit polling station staff. Separate guidance will be produced on:
  - Impact of the Elections Act 2022 on polling station staff roles.

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## 2 Background

- 2.1 Elections cannot be delivered without polling station staff. It is vital sufficient staff with the right skills are recruited. There are increasing concerns traditional forms of recruitment will not be sufficient for future polls.
- 2.2 For each polling station, the Returning Officer (RO) must appoint and pay a Presiding Officer (PO) and enough Poll Clerks (PCs) as necessary for the purpose of the election.<sup>1</sup> The RO cannot appoint people who have been employed by or on behalf of a candidate.
- 2.3 Staff employed at an election are legally employees of the RO, not the council.
- 2.4 Polling station staff are temporary workers and are paid relatively low fees, with PCs often only receiving the equivalent of the National Minimum Wage. Yet they play a crucial role in the administration of elections by implementing legislation and ensuring people can vote easily, securely and in secret.
- 2.5 The Elections Act 2022 will bring new burdens. From May 2023 additional responsibilities include voter identification and becoming familiar with any additional equipment and measures to support disabled voters. Further measures will be introduced later in 2023 including, new rules on handing in postal votes at polling stations
- 2.6 Most election teams keep a database of **experienced staff** who have worked at previous elections. This is usually the starting point to make polling station staff appointments.
- 2.7 Some people want to work in a polling station to promote democracy or help provide a public service. If people like these put their names forward, they can be added to the database of people **willing and potentially suitable** to work on elections.
- 2.8 Others hear about election work by 'word of mouth', from **friends or family** who have worked on elections previously.
- 2.9 To supplement databases of available staff, many ROs recruit from **within the council**. Local authorities can permit their staff to work on elections but are not required to do so.<sup>1</sup> Many councils allow

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<sup>1</sup> However, at Police and Crime Commissioner, Senedd Cymru and Scottish Parliament elections, there is a duty on the local authority to provide staff to assist (Section 54

their staff to work at a polling station without taking leave to bolster numbers willing to help.

2.10 The Electoral Commission's report on the May 2022 local elections in England stated there were: "problems around finding experienced polling station staff and a high number of recruits dropping out ahead of polling day. While Covid had less of an impact on the administration of elections this year than last, it still remained a factor, despite many of the restrictions required in 2021 being removed."<sup>2</sup> Similar observations were made at the local elections in Scotland and Wales.<sup>3</sup> This creates a risk for the delivery of future scheduled elections, and at a UK parliamentary general election in particular, with lead-times likely to be short.

2.11 There are further concerns the Elections Act 2022 could hinder staff recruitment, with some people put off taking on the job due to **new additional responsibilities, including:**

**Checking voter identification** (from May 2023):

- presiding over a longer voting process
- explaining new requirements and understanding what constitutes 'valid' ID
- checking identification in private areas as necessary
- managing queues
- potentially refusing an elector a ballot paper (PO only) and dealing with the likely fallout
- dealing with additional official recording paperwork including a ballot paper refusal list and voter ID evaluation form.

**Supporting disabled voters** (from May 2023), may involve:

- supporting voters to use any additional special equipment or devices allocated to the polling station
- extended training on accessibility matters
- increased awareness of the barriers faced by disabled voters, including and how staff can help reduce them
- understating that not all disabilities are visible, and some voters may have more than one disability
- a potential increase in disabled voters assisted by a companion

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Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011; Article 19 National Assembly for Wales Order 2007; Article 15 Scottish Parliament Elections Order 2015)

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2.12 Some people who have previously worked at polling stations may not have the necessary skills to deal with the new requirements. Appropriate training to upskill polling station staff will be required. This could cover:

- customer service
- assertiveness
- decision-making
- dealing with difficult situations
- managing data
- equalities

2.13 Even with training, there may be staff who are no longer suitable to carry out the extended range of responsibilities. It is also possible staff may drop out after training once the new requirements become more apparent.

2.14 It may also be necessary to recruit **more polling station staff than in previous years**. To increase capacity at polling stations, the Electoral Commission has reviewed recommended polling station staff ratios in light of these changes.

2.15 The new ratios are for polling stations are:

| Electorate (excluding postal voters) | Recommended number of polling staff |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Less than 1,250                      | 1 PO and 2 PCs                      |
| 1,250 – 2,250                        | 1 PO and 3 PCs                      |

2.16 **Early communication** with staff on your database is a proactive way to provide information about the new requirements, as well as sounding them out about their availability for upcoming/future elections.

2.17 You can also take additional proactive steps to recruit external polling station staff. The easiest way to do this is to include information on applying for roles on your **website**.

## 3 Key considerations for proactive recruitment

### Early communication

- 3.1 If you decide to contact staff on your database earlier than usual, in November or December for example, you could send out:
- a general letter or email
  - a short survey online
  - internal communications
- 3.2 Think about key messages you want to include in your communications, such as:
- the Elections Act is now law
  - there will be an additional step in the voting process
  - there will be additional responsibilities for polling station staff
- 3.3 Let them know about your plans for supporting them, such as providing guidance and enhanced or additional training. Some councils also run training to support experienced PCs to take the step up to POs.
- 3.4 The AEA can provide training for your polling station staff, further [information and booking details](#) can be found on our [website](#)
- 3.5 If you are reviewing job descriptions and pay, you should let them know when you will provide updates.
- 3.6 Give them an opportunity to tell you if they are no longer interested in working in a polling station. This will give you an early indication of the likely numbers of new staff you need to recruit.
- 3.7 We have produced an early availability communication template at [Appendix A](#) which you can adapt.

### External advertising

- 3.8 If you plan to increase your current pool of election staff by advertising externally, we would advise you to seek support from HR colleagues.
- 3.9 Your HR team will already have established processes for recruiting and selecting applicants you can utilise. However, as appointments

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are temporary and for the RO rather than the council, there may be opportunities to streamline the usual council process.

3.10 Your HR team may be able to support you employing staff, even if you retain responsibility for appointing them. Some councils have adopted a 'one council approach' at recent elections to support elections teams and afford them capacity. HR may be able to provide you with a range of support, such as:

- updating job descriptions and person specifications
- reviewing pay, including pension and holiday pay requirements
- corresponding with election staff queries
- carrying out right to work checks
- other screening / shortlisting
- dealing with employment queries
- paying staff

3.11 Person specifications and job descriptions will all need to be updated to account for additional responsibilities introduced by the Elections Act.

3.12 You should be confident the people you appoint are capable and trustworthy. There will be extra factors you may want to consider before advertising externally.

For example, will you:

- need to update your **application form**? It may need additional sections for employment history and relevant experience
- ask that **criminal records** be disclosed? You can only refuse a role if their record makes them unsuitable. For example, someone with a fraud conviction might not be suitable for a PO role.
- be clear about the importance of **political neutrality**? You cannot appoint anyone to work at elections who has been employed by or on behalf of a candidate in or about the election.<sup>4</sup> You may also want to stipulate that people related or connected to a candidate will not be appointed. You may decide not to appoint people who participate in the election in a way which calls their impartiality into question, such as assigning a candidate's nomination paper.

- adopt a more formal **shortlisting** process than previously?  
If you receive more applications than vacancies can you identify which applicants best meet your selection criteria?

3.13 We have produced a template election staff application form at [Appendix B](#) you can adapt. We have also produced a template job descriptions for Presiding Officers at [Appendix C](#) and for Poll Clerks at [Appendix D](#).

## Election staff recruitment webpage

3.14 A dedicated webpage is a useful way of sharing information about available roles and capturing applicants' details.

3.15 You could work with your Communications team to make the page as engaging and attractive as possible. They will also be able to advise on plain English and accessibility.

3.16 Key things to include are:

- an eye-catching introduction
- reasons why people should apply - these could include money, civil duty, an interesting and important role
- what roles you have available – this should include enough detail for applicants to understand what's involved. To prevent the webpage becoming too large, you could use expandable/collapsible content sections.<sup>2</sup> Or you could provide a link to job descriptions. If you have any details about training requirements, include these too.
- the minimum eligibility requirements are: age, and right to work criteria:
  - 16/17 year olds can only work in a polling station for up to 8 hours.
  - the same applies in Scotland and Wales, but with further exceptions, including if no-one over 18 is available to do the work. 16/17 year olds may be employed on a daytime count.
  - we would advise you to seek HR advice as necessary on restrictions around employing young people.

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<sup>2</sup> An example of a page with expandable/collapsible sections for different roles - <https://www.leeds.gov.uk/your-council/elections/information-about-working-on-elections>



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- make sure the application process is as easy as possible. It can be useful to include a dedicated email address for staff applications and queries.<sup>3</sup>
- an online application form can make the process easier and cheaper and ensure that key information is not missed out.<sup>4</sup>
- a link to your privacy notice
- you could also include a further information section, or FAQs, particularly if the same queries are coming up regularly (see [below](#))

3.17 We have produced a template election staff recruitment webpage at [Appendix E](#) which you can adapt.

3.18 As well as supporting you to develop a webpage, ask your Communications team to help promote the page, through social media accounts and internal communication channels. You could also ask community engagement colleagues to share with their contacts, and for elected members to share with their community contacts for further distribution. We have included some template social media messages at [Appendix G](#).

3.19 In two-tier areas in England, it's worth asking the county council to signpost to your district council election staff recruitment webpages from their website.

## FAQs for election staff

3.20 As mentioned above, your elections staff webpage could include a link to more information or FAQs.

3.21 These could provide more information about what to expect from working at an election, and the processes involved.

3.22 Anyone making enquiries about applying for election work could be signposted to these, taking pressure off your team in the run-up to elections.

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<sup>3</sup> An example of dedicated contact details, at the bottom of this page: <https://www.southoxon.gov.uk/south-oxfordshire-district-council/local-democracy-and-elections/elections-and-voting/working-elections-2/>

<sup>4</sup> An example of an online application form: <https://www.islington.gov.uk/about-the-council/voting-and-elections/working-for-the-returning-officer/election-staff-application-form> Another example: [https://self.highland.gov.uk/service/Employment\\_at\\_elections](https://self.highland.gov.uk/service/Employment_at_elections)

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3.23 We have produced a template FAQs page at [Appendix G](#) which you can adapt.

## 4 Identifying alternative pools of staff

### Local authority staff

- 4.1 In addition to proactive recruitment, you could look to expand your database of polling station staff by identifying alternative pools of staff within your council and other organisations. This can further mitigate the risk of relying solely on your existing database.
- 4.2 Common sources of election staff include:
- local authority departments
  - previous employees
  - other local authorities
  - polling station booking contacts
  - housing associations
  - banks and building societies
  - students
- 4.3 Election staff are traditionally recruited from among council employees. **Local authority staff** can be reliable and accountable. In some areas, council staff are permitted to work at a polling station without having to use annual leave. Council staff often welcome the opportunity as it is different to their usual work.
- 4.4 You can reach out to local authority employees in a variety of ways, such as:
- internal communications (e-mail/intranet/staff newsletter)
  - lunchtime drop-in sessions to discover and discuss the various election roles
  - recruitment campaign as part of a presentation to local authority managers' forum/meeting – ideally led by your RO to emphasise the election is a corporate event with far reaching consequences should it fail. Your RO could encourage managers to release staff and become involved.
- 4.5 Some difficulties with council recruitment include:
- reluctance of department heads to release staff
  - staff having to take annual leave or time off in lieu
  - charges from other departments for use of their staff
- 4.6 Potential remedies to deal with the above include:
- RO to exert pressure on department heads to release staff to ensure the safe and effective delivery of the election

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- adopting a one council approach to elections with buy-in from the Chief Executive down and recognising the election as a high-profile corporate event that everyone should engage with wherever possible
  - include clause in contracts of new staff regarding election duty
- 4.7 You could also work with other council departments who employ **casual or seasonal staff**, such as exam invigilators, survey teams or care staff, to see if they can provide information and encourage people to apply for election work.
- 4.8 **Previous employees** – Remind local authority staff they can continue to apply for election roles if they leave the authority. You should keep their details on your database, unless they ask you not to, in accordance with your Privacy Notice.
- 4.9 You could, for example, include a line in your election staff appointment letters to say internal staff can reapply for future elections if they leave the council.
- 4.10 Another option is to see if the council's HR service could include a form in exit paperwork for staff leavers so they can register interest in elections work. We have produced a template form at [Appendix H](#), or you could ask for your standard application form to be included.
- 4.11 For local government elections and by-elections, election staff can sometimes be recruited from **another local authority**. The May 2022 elections in England saw authorities without elections loan staff to neighbouring authorities with elections. At least one authority reported they were lucky to be able to do this, as they would have struggled to fill vacancies otherwise. <sup>5</sup>
- 4.12 We are carrying out a [survey of local authorities and VJBs to gather information about those with polls and those without polls in May 2023](#). We will create spreadsheets to enable local authorities/VJBs to contact each other to talk about and agree support arrangements. See the [Elections 2023](#) webpage for further details.
- 4.13 Branches may also encourage and put arrangements in place to enable support arrangements. We have produced resources to assist with encouraging such support in our [Branch Peer Support Toolkit](#).
- 4.14 Of course, the ability to recruit from another local authority is limited when there are regional, national and UK-wide elections.
- 4.15 Another source of election staff is **polling station booking contacts**. It can be very useful to have someone at the polling station who is a keyholder and knows the building. You could

include information on applying for polling station staff roles with your polling station booking letters.

- 4.16 Some authorities have recruited election staff from **housing associations** and **banks and buildings societies**. For example, they have written directly to bank branch managers asking them to circulate details about election work, as bank staff have traditionally held the required numeracy skills for the count.
- 4.17 Others have contacted universities and student unions to recruit **students**. Students have been found to be quick and accurate at the count, and willing to work late into the night.
- 4.18 College and sixth form students could also be targeted. 16/17-year-olds can work on a daytime count, but not an overnight count. 16/17-year-olds can only work for a maximum of 8 hours, so may not be employed for a full day at a polling station.<sup>6</sup>
- 4.19 If you are considering employing young people, seek advice from your HR team about the statutory employment rules.
- 4.20 Election roles could also be advertised through **job centres** and **agencies**. However, as the employment is temporary and may affect benefits, this may not attract many applicants.

## **Alternative pools of staff**

- 4.21 Potential alternative pools of staff include:
- Voluntary organisations, including civic societies and 'Friends of' groups
  - Community run events, e.g., ParkRun
  - Advertising in community facilities and venues
- 4.22 Individuals who give up their time to work on a voluntary basis might also be enthusiastic about supporting elections. They may also want to broaden their experience and develop new skills.
- 4.23 **Voluntary organisations** could be contacted to see if they can help advertise election staff vacancies. Support organisations such as your local Voluntary Action may be able to help with this, for example by providing a list of organisations in your area. Your council's community and engagement teams will also be able to provide information.
- 4.24 There may be **community run events** in your area, such as [parkruns](#), which may be another source of recruitment. You could

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contact the organisers of [events in your area](#) to ask them to share details of election vacancies.

- 4.25 Your council's events team can help identify upcoming events you could engage with. For example, sporting events, family fun days.
- 4.26 You could work with your communications colleagues to produce posters or leaflets which you could send to organisations or hand out at events.
- 4.27 Community and engagement teams will also be able to provide information about the different voluntary and community groups in your area and how to reach out to them.
- 4.28 If you are contacting other organisations, it would be a good idea to telephone them to try and find the name of the best person for you to correspond with.
- 4.29 Otherwise, you could write to the main office address, or email their generic inbox.
- 4.30 We have produced a template contact communication at [Appendix I](#) which you can adapt and send to organisations.
- 4.31 There is also a template communication to individuals at [Appendix J](#), which they can then forward on your behalf.
- 4.32 You could also consider contacting **community facilities and venues** to see if they can display information about vacancies. These could include:
  - libraries
  - community centres
  - village halls
  - doctors and dentist surgeries
  - pharmacies
  - colleges and universities

## Appendix A

### Template early availability communication

Dear [insert name]

I am contacting you well in advance of our next scheduled elections on [insert date], because you [have previously worked for us / have expressed an interest in working for us] at a polling station.

We want to keep our election staff database as up to date as possible, in preparation for [insert date] and any other election or referendum which may be called at short notice.

We also want to tell you about some changes to the way elections will run in future.

**The Elections Act 2022** is now law, and will bring in the following measures in May 2023:

- voters will need to show an eligible piece of photographic identification before being issued with a ballot paper
- additional support to make it easier for people with disabilities to vote

The UK Government intends these changes to be in place from 4 May 2023 and for any UK Parliamentary General elections from October 2023, [PCC elections (in England and Wales)] [local elections and referendums (in England)].

These changes will impact the voting process for polling station staff in the following ways:

- you will need to ask voters to show acceptable identification before issuing them with a ballot paper
- you will need to check the photo on the identification is a reasonable likeness of the voter
- polling staff will need to check the identification is an acceptable form of ID
- there will need to be private areas for voters who want to show you their identification in private or to remove a face covering or mask
- the ballot paper issuing process will take longer, which may create queues at busier times

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- POs may need to refuse a ballot paper, for example, if a voter does not bring acceptable identification or you do not believe the photo looks like the elector
- there will be additional paperwork to complete such as a ballot paper refusal list and voter ID evaluation form
- there will potentially be increased numbers of disabled people voting with a companion
- you may need to support disabled voters to use special equipment or devices such as **[insert if you know of any additional equipment you are introducing now]**

We are expecting final official guidance in early 2023, but wanted to reassure you that we are making plans now.

Over the coming months we will be:

- **updating polling station staff job descriptions**
- **considering if and where we will need extra polling station staff**
- **reviewing polling staff pay for**
- **looking into the additional training you will need**

In light of these new requirements, we would like to check your availability to work at elections in **[May / future]**.

Please **[complete the short survey insert link]** or **[email us at insert email address]** to let us know whether you are still willing to work in **[May / future]**.

If you have any questions, please get in touch as soon as possible **[insert contact details]**.

Yours sincerely

**[Electoral Services Manager/Returning Officer]**



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## Appendix B

### Template application form

#### Application for employment at elections

|  |                  |                                    |   |
|--|------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Full name:</b>  |                  |                                    |   |
| <b>Are you:</b> male <input type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> non-binary <input type="checkbox"/> prefer not to say <input type="checkbox"/> |                  |                                    |   |
| <b>Address:</b>  |                  |                                    |   |
|  |                  | <b>Postcode:</b>                   |   |
| <b>Email address:</b>  |                  |                                    |   |
| <b>Home tel no:</b>  |                  | <b>Mobile tel no:</b>              |   |
| <b>Work tel no:</b>  |                  | <b>Can we contact you at work?</b> | Yes <input type="checkbox"/><br>No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Date of birth:</b>  |                  | <b>National insurance no:</b>      |   |
| <b>If employed by [xxxx Council] please state job title and service]</b>   |                  |                                    |   |
| Before returning the form [xxxx Council] employees should obtain consent from their Manager regarding availability for election duties                       |                  |                                    |   |
| <b>Current occupation - if employed by someone other than the Council</b>  | <b>Job title</b> | <b>Brief description of duties</b> | <b>Date employed from:</b>                                  |
| <b>Most recent previous employment - if retired or unemployed</b>  | <b>Job title</b> | <b>Brief description of duties</b> | <b>Date employed from:</b><br><br><b>Date employed to:</b>  |
| <b>Which election roles are you interested in?</b>   |                  |                                    |   |

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Presiding Officer  Poll Clerk  Count Assistant

**Give brief details of any previous election work**

**Give details of the skills, knowledge and experience which are suitable for the election role(s) you are interested in:**

**Do you have access to transport to enable you to carry out the role?** Yes  No

## **Wales only**

**Please describe your Welsh language skills**

Basic  Competent  Fluent

**Do you have a disability as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995?** Yes  No

Please let us know if you would need support to work in an election role (we may contact you to discuss further)

**Have you been convicted of a criminal offence** (that is not spent under the terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974), or been subjected to a caution or bind-over, or do you have any prosecutions pending?

Yes  No

If "yes" please provide full details including dates

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## Declaration

I confirm that the above information is correct and that:

- I am eligible to work in the UK (you will be required to provide evidence such as a valid passport)
- I am not/will not be employed (paid or voluntary) by any political party or candidate at the election
- [I have not/will not take part in the election in any way which calls my impartiality into question at the election]
- [I am not related or connected to any candidate at the election]

|         |  |       |  |
|---------|--|-------|--|
| Signed: |  | Date: |  |
|---------|--|-------|--|

## Your personal data

The information you provide on this form will be processed by the Returning Officer, who is the 'data controller' for the purposes of Data Protection legislation. It will only be used for the proper management of the election process and in the administration of election staff.

For further information see our [Privacy Notice](#). *[add link]*

**Please return this form to [email address] or [postal address] [other response methods].**

Please note submission of an application form does not guarantee appointment. If you are not initially allocated a post, we will add your details to our reserve list.

## Appendix C

### Template job description – Presiding Officer

**Job Title:** Presiding Officer

**Job type:** Supervisory

#### **Key responsibilities and activities:**

- Responsible for the conduct of the ballot in the polling station.
- Responsible for the management of your polling staff.
- Ensuring the accurate delivery of the poll and account for all ballot papers.
- Ensuring that voter identification is asked for and checked before ballot papers are issued
- Ensuring electors understand the new voter identification requirements including what constitutes an acceptable form of ID
- Ensuring electors are able to present their ID in private when requested
- Responsible for refusing a voter a ballot paper where no ID is presented; or you do not consider the ID to be a good likeness; or consider it to be a forgery
- Comply with any instructions from the Returning Officer and their staff.
- Ensure that all electors are treated with respect and receive the same experience wherever they are and whatever time they vote.
- You must always ensure the secrecy and security of the ballot.
- Liaise with the key holder and plan for the opening and closing of your polling building. You should also visit your polling station in advance to ensure polling day arrangements are in place.

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- Contact your poll clerk(s), and any other Presiding Officer(s) appointed to the same polling place, at least a week before Polling Day.
- Collect your ballot box (s) and equipment before polling day at your allocated time slot. The ballot box (s) must be kept in a secure environment until polling day
- Responsible for setting up your polling stations and leaving the building in a neat and secure state.
- Ensure your polling stations open and close at the required times.
- Be responsible for assigning work to the polling station staff and ensuring that the correct procedure for voting is followed.
- Deal with members of the public in a helpful, polite, and professional manner.
- Support disabled voters throughout the voting process.
- Completion of the ballot paper account and all other paperwork, including the ballot paper refusal list and voter ID evaluation form.
- Delivering the ballot box and all other equipment and sundries to the count venue promptly after the close of poll.
- You cannot be employed if you have carried out any duties on behalf of any political party or candidate at the election.

**Hours / days required:** Visit polling station in advance – 1 hour; collection of ballot box 1 hour; training – 2 hours; Polling day 6am – 11pm 17 hours

**Based at:** Any polling station within the area

**Person Specification:**

| Criteria         | Attributes (Essential/desirable)   |
|------------------|--|
| <b>Knowledge</b> | <p><b><u>Essential</u></b></p> <p>Working knowledge of the electoral process</p> |

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|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
|                             |  |
| <b>Skills and abilities</b> | <p><b><u>Essential</u></b></p> <p>Previous customer-service experience</p> <p>Experience of having worked at a Polling Station on at least 2 other occasions.</p> <p>Ability to work independently under pressure</p> <p><b><u>Desirable</u></b></p> <p>Previous line-management or supervisory experience</p> |
| <b>Other</b>                | <p><b><u>Essential</u></b></p> <p>Ability to remain politically neutral</p> <p>Good timekeeping</p> <p>Fully literate and numerate</p> <p><b><u>Desirable</u></b></p> <p>Diplomacy and tact when working with members of the public</p>  |
|                             | <p><b><u>Essential</u></b></p> <p>Access to own car which is insured for Business Use</p>  |

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## Appendix D

### Template job description – Poll Clerk

**Job Title:** Poll Clerk

**Job type:** Administrative

#### Key responsibilities and activities:

- Ensure that voters are able to cast their vote in secret, free from influence and in a calm atmosphere
- Ask for and check voter identification before issuing ballot papers.
- Ensuring electors understand the new voter identification requirements including what constitutes an acceptable form of ID
- Ensuring electors are able to present their ID in private when requested
- Comply with any instructions from the Presiding Officer and/or Returning Officer.
- Ensure that all electors are treated with respect and receive the same experience wherever they are and whatever time they vote.
- You must always ensure the secrecy and security of the ballot.
- Deal with members of the public in a helpful, polite, and professional manner.
- Support disabled voters use any special equipment or devices.
- You cannot be employed if you have carried out any duties on behalf of any political party or candidate at the election.

**Hours / days required:** Training – 1 - 2 hours; Polling day 6am – 11pm  
17 hours

**Based at:** Any polling station within the area

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## Person Specification:

| Criteria                    | Attributes (Essential/desirable)   |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Knowledge</b>            | <p><b><u>Desirable</u></b></p> <p>Working knowledge of the electoral process</p>   |
| <b>Skills and abilities</b> | <p><b><u>Essential</u></b></p> <p>Ability to carry out work as instructed, even under pressure</p> <p><b><u>Desirable</u></b></p> <p>Experience of working at a polling station</p>                  |
| <b>Other</b>                | <p><b><u>Essential</u></b></p> <p>Ability to remain politically neutral</p> <p>Good timekeeping</p> <p><b><u>Desirable</u></b></p> <p>Diplomacy and tact when working with members of the public</p> |
|                             | <p><b><u>Essential</u></b></p> <p>Able to travel to your polling station at the required times</p>   |



## Appendix E

### Template election staff recruitment webpage

#### Working at elections

Have you ever thought about working at a polling station or helping to count the votes at an election? Our Elections Team is always looking to recruit motivated and enthusiastic staff. We would love to hear from you if you're interested in becoming involved.

[Elections are a great opportunity to work as part of a team and take a sense of pride in playing a role in supporting democracy.]

[You could help us by playing an important role for your local community – plus it's great way to earn some extra money.]

#### Working at a polling station

Polling station staff are responsible for making sure voting procedures are correctly followed. On election day, staff must have their polling station set up and ready to open for 7am, working through the day until after the polls close at 10pm.

[All staff employed to work at a polling station must attend a training session before taking up their appointment.]

#### Available roles:

Presiding Officer *[link to job description, or add an expandable/collapsible section with bullet points describing the role in more detail]*

Poll Clerk *[link to job description, or add an expandable/collapsible section with bullet points describing the role in more detail]*

#### Working at the count

Counting assistants count the votes cast at polling stations, together with any postal votes. Depending on the election, counting may take place straight after the polls close (10pm on polling day) or on the following day.

Our election counts are usually held at *[insert venue]*

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## Available roles:

Count Assistant *[link to job description, or add an expandable/collapsible section with bullet points describing the role in more detail]*

*[add other roles as necessary]*

## Eligibility

To work at elections, you must:

- be at least **[18]** years old at a polling station and at least **[16/18]** years old to work at the count
- be entitled to work in the UK (in accordance with the [Asylum and Immigration Act 2006](#))
- not work on behalf of a candidate during the election campaign
- *[not be related to a potential candidate]*
- consent to working in excess of normal working hours outlined in the [working time directive](#)
- comply with secrecy requirements which will be supplied to all staff
- *[add any other local requirements]*

## How to apply

Please read the descriptions of the jobs we have available, then complete and *[return]* / *[submit]* an application form *[insert link]*.

*[Return the application form to [insert address / email address ]*

*[Submit the online application form through our website.]*

If you have any questions please phone *[phone number]* *[insert other contact details]*

## More information

For more information about working at elections, please see our [FAQs](#). *[insert link, or add an expandable/collapsible section]*

## Information we'll hold about you

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We will keep information about you for electoral recruitment purposes. To find out how we store your personal data, please read our [privacy notice](#) *[insert link]*

**Suggested content if you are using expandable/collapsible sections to give more information about the roles**

## Presiding Officer

### Duties

- attend training and any briefing sessions, and comply with Returning Officer's instructions
- collect ballot box and its contents *[the day/two days]* before polling day and keep it secure
- liaise with the polling station keyholder before polling day to confirm arrangements for opening and closing the premises
- transport the ballot box and its contents to the polling station on polling day
- open and close the polling station on time
- organise the polling station layout, taking into account all voters' needs
- be aware of access issues and familiarise yourself with any special equipment or devices to help voters with disabilities
- take charge of the polling station, ensuring the secrecy and security of the ballot
- be responsible for the health and safety of polling station staff, voters and visitors
- keep the polling station neat and tidy
- instruct and supervise Poll Clerks
- ask voters to show their photo identification and check the photo is a reasonable likeness before issuing ballot papers
- check voters' identification is on the approved list of acceptable ID
- where applicable, check voters' ID in a private area

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- when required, refusing to give a voter a ballot paper if they do not have an acceptable form of identification
- ensure voters can cast their vote in secret, free from influence and in a calm atmosphere
- check and mark electors off in the polling station register and complete other official paperwork
- give voters ballot papers and make sure they put them into the ballot box
- help voters where appropriate, and support disabled voters throughout the voting process
- deal with special voting procedures as required e.g., dealing with anonymous voters, issuing tendered ballot papers
- accept completed postal vote packs handed in at the polling station
- be polite and professional when dealing with all visitors to the polling station, remaining politically impartial at all times
- maintain order in the polling station and calling for advice and help from the elections office where necessary
- manage the attendance of official observers and others entitled to be in the polling station, making sure they do not interfere with the voting process
- monitor the activities of candidate/party supporters known as 'tellers' outside the polling place
- account for all ballot papers issued and unissued, and complete a ballot paper account
- complete polling station paperwork throughout the day and at once the poll has closed
- once the polls have closed and all votes have been cast, supervise the dismantling of the polling station, leaving the room as you found it
- [transport the ballot box to the designated drop off location]

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## Skills, knowledge and experience

- good knowledge of the voting process
- previous experience of working in a polling station [on at least two occasions]
- good communication skills and ability to explain procedures to a range of people in a calm and assertive manner
- commitment to customer care and equal opportunities
- good administrative skills and attention to detail
- punctual and reliable
- [access to a vehicle to transport ballot box and equipment]

## Poll Clerk

### Duties

- comply with instructions and attend training
- help the Presiding Officer to set up the polling station, taking into account the needs of all voters, including:
  - put up signs, statutory notices and voter instructions inside and outside the polling station
  - setting up polling booths
  - prepare the polling station for a 7am opening
- be aware of access issues and familiar with any special equipment or devices to help voters with disabilities
- maintain the secrecy of the ballot
- keep the polling station neat and tidy
- ask voters to show their photo identification and check it is a reasonable likeness before giving out a ballot paper
- refer identification checks to the Presiding Officer if you are not sure an identification is valid
- make sure voters can cast their vote in secret, free from influence and in a calm atmosphere

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- check and mark electors off in the polling station register and complete other official paperwork
- give voters their ballot paper and make sure they put them into the ballot box
- help with any other polling station duties when asked to by the Presiding Officer
- be polite and professional when dealing with all visitors to the polling station, remaining politically impartial at all times
- once the polls have closed and all votes have been cast, help to dismantle the polling station, leaving the premises as you found it.

## **Skills, knowledge and experience**

- basic understanding of the voting process
- good communication skills
- commitment to customer care and equal opportunities
- good administrative skills and attention to detail
- punctual and reliable

## **Count Assistant**

### **Duties**

- comply with instructions and, where necessary, attend training
- maintain the secrecy of the ballot
- act professionally and impartially at all times
- count ballot papers as directed by a supervisor
- re-count ballot papers if required
- when instructed, sort ballot papers for individual candidates/choices
- identify doubtful ballot papers

## **Skills, knowledge and experience**

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- numeracy skills and attention to detail
- punctual and reliable
- ability to work under pressure

## Appendix F

### Template social media messages and ideas for promoting election staff recruitment

#### Councils with elections on 4 May 2023

The following suggested posts are short and should work for all text-based social media channels:

- Have you ever wondered how we recruit the people who work in polling stations and election counts? Visit our website to find out how you can apply for temporary elections work next May:
- We'll employ hundreds of people to help run polling stations at local elections on 4 May next year. Could you be one of them? Visit our website to find out more and apply today:
- Fancy earning a bit of extra money working in a polling station or at an election count? Our applications for temporary election workers for 4 May 2023 are open now. Visit our website to find out more:
- Be a local election hero. Apply today to work in a polling station on 4 May 2023. We need hundreds of people to help run elections in *insert area name*, could you be one of them? Find out more:

Don't forget to ask local authority staff and existing election workers to share posts with their family and friends. You may also want to consider asking elected members to share Facebook posts in local Facebook groups, as they will know the groups with the largest reach.

#### Hashtags

Could include #LE23 #LocalElections #ElectionWorkers

You may want to consider using a local area hashtag to help you track your and other people's posts, along the lines of #HelpBedfordVote, but do check it's not already in use.

#### Images



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Try to use photos from previous elections to illustrate posts if you have any. You can also [download some generic photos from our files](#) to use.

Graphics can also be effective and increase recognition of your recruitment campaign. Some examples from [US poll worker recruitment day](#) may give you some ideas.

## **Other ways to spread the word**

Don't forget any regular newsletters sent out via community engagement or housing teams, parish or town newsletters and asking partners to share the information via their community networks.

## **Video content**

Don't let perfection be the enemy of good. Video content is preferred on many social networks, so even short videos from you, your Returning Officer, or friendly polling station/count workers encouraging people to apply, will help spread your message further.

## **Press coverage**

If you need large numbers of people to apply, you could ask your communications lead to speak with local media about covering your recruitment drive as a story:

- Facts and figures help – how many polling stations, workers, voters do you have/need.
- Any photos/video you can share for them to use are helpful.
- Do you have any case studies of people they could speak to about their experience of the role/s?
  - Offering some quotes from a known and reliable long-serving person and a new person would make it more of a story.
  - Any memorable (preferably positive!) stories to share, such as car boot polling stations. You want to get across that training and common sense mean people can always vote. Polling station workers are problem-solving and competent.

## Appendix G

### Template FAQs for election staff

#### When is election work available?

Scheduled elections usually take place on the first Thursday of May. Other by-elections for MPs or local and parish councillors can take place at any other time of the year, and on any weekday.

These polls are all run from 7am to 10pm. If you work at a polling station you need to arrive by **[6:30am] at the latest** to have time to get everything ready.

Polling station staff are not **[usually]** permitted to leave the premises between 7am and 10pm. You should take enough food and drink with you for the whole day.

It is a long day, and you must be willing to work more hours than the [working time directive](#) limit.

The votes are usually counted and results announced **[at night after the polls close (10pm on polling day), or the following morning] / [the day after the election, or at night after the polls close (10pm on polling day)]**. The length of time a count takes depend on the type of election, how many people turned out to vote and whether re-counts are required. You must be prepared to stay as long as it takes.

*[Add a table about recent count finish times for different polls to act as a guide]*

#### Where are the jobs?

Polling stations are located across the **[xxxx council area]**. **[Please see the [list of the current polling places \(insert link\)](#) in our area]** You should be prepared to travel anywhere in the **[district / borough]** and **we cannot guarantee you will be asked to run a polling station closest to where you live.**

The election count usually takes place at **[insert venue]**.

#### Who can apply?

The minimum requirements are set out in [Eligibility \[link back to page\]](#)

If you are appointed to work at a polling station, it is important you remain politically impartial when you are working at the election. This

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means you cannot publicly show your support for a particular political party or candidate in any way.

## How do I prove I am entitled to work in the UK?

If you are appointed to work at a polling station, you will need to provide evidence of your eligibility to work in the UK by showing us either:

- your valid passport, or
- your birth certificate and proof of National Insurance number (e.g., P60, P45, payslip)

## Who are you looking for?

We are looking for motivated and enthusiastic staff.

To work at a polling station, you should have excellent customer service skills and attention to detail. You will need to ensure that the proper procedures for voting are followed **including checking voter identification**.

To work at an election count, you should have good numeracy skills.

We expect anyone working at an election to act impartially and be polite and professional in dealing with all voters, candidates and agents, Electoral Commission representatives and any accredited observers.

Further details for each job role can be [found on this page](#). *[insert link to page]*.

## How many jobs are available?

For scheduled May elections, we usually employ approximately *[insert figure]* number of temporary staff to work at polling stations and *[insert figure]* for the count.

For by-elections during the rest of the year, the number of staff needed depends on the type of election and how many polling stations are needed.

## How do you appoint staff?

Appointments are temporary and made by the Returning Officer rather than the council. The council's usual recruitment policies and procedures do not apply, but we follow the principles of equal opportunities and good employment practices.

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[We use several of our own staff in the first instance, and supplement this with additional external staff.]

Anyone who is not given a role is automatically added to our reserve list and may be contacted closer to election day if a role becomes available.

## When will I know if you want me to work?

We will contact you [by email / letter] if you have been appointed. [For 4 May 2023 polls, if you have not heard from us by xxx you have not been appointed] We often have more applications than vacancies, and do not notify unsuccessful applicants.

If you are not given a role, we will add you to our reserve list in case any staff drop out closer to polling day.

Please do not contact us to check if your application has been received. [If you receive our automatic email response, we have received your application.]

## Will training be provided?

Yes. All polling staff must take part in [face to face] / [online training]. more details will be included in your appointment letter.

[Count staff will be briefed about what they need to do before the count begins]. / [Count staff will be required to undertake training. More details will be included in your appointment letter].

## Who will I be working with?

You will be supported by experienced staff.

If you are employed to work in a polling station, you will usually be working with two or three other staff.

If you are employed to work at a count, you will be part of a bigger team, of up to [insert figure] counting assistants.

## How much do you pay?

Pay rates vary depending on the role and type of poll. Fees for attending training and travel expenses may also be paid where appropriate.

The amounts will be confirmed before polling day.

All fees are subject to tax on a PAYE basis but are exempt from National Insurance contributions.

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The amount we pay for each role is regularly reviewed.

## Can election work affect my benefits/pension?

Yes, any election work you do may affect any benefit or state pension receive. You will be responsible for telling your benefit or pension provider about your earnings.

## How can I vote if I am working at a polling station?

If you are working at a polling station, you may want to apply for a [postal](#) or [proxy](#) vote. *[link to EC or own applications]*

## Will there be more opportunities to work at elections?

We are always looking to add people to our elections staff database.

We must stress that being appointed to work at an election is not a guarantee of work at future elections. The work available depends on the number of applications and available vacancies. We also cannot guarantee that you will always work with the same people or in the same location.

## Appendix H

### Template staff leaver form

Dear **[insert name]**

I am sorry that you are leaving the council, and wish you success in your next venture, whatever that may be.

Did you know that the Electoral Services team employ external staff as well as council staff to work at elections?

We are always looking to bolster our pool of available staff, and would love to hear from you if you're interested in becoming involved.

If you wish to register an interest in working at elections in future, please contact the electoral services team **[insert email address]** and provide the following details:

- Name
- Address (including postcode)
- Email address
- Date of Birth
- National Insurance Number

We will send you further details of roles available prior to the next electoral event.

Yours sincerely

**[Electoral Services Manager/Returning Officer]**

## Appendix I

### Template letter to organisations

Dear

I am contacting you to ask you for your help in supporting [xxxx] council to deliver elections.

Every year, we employ around [xxx] staff to work at elections, in polling stations across the council area, and the counting of the votes.

Although some of our election staff work for the council, this year we need to employ additional external staff.

We are looking for people who:

- can act professionally and impartially
- can follow instructions and
- have good customer service skills

We have more information about the roles on our website including how to apply. [\[insert link\]](#)

We are hoping you may be able to help by:

- [\[displaying posters in communal areas\]](#)
- mentioning the vacancies in your newsletters, blogs or social media channels
- sending the [\[enclosed/attached\]](#) information to individuals and encouraging them where possible to apply

We would really appreciate any assistance you can offer with our recruitment campaign.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me at [\[insert contact details\]](#)

Yours sincerely

**Electoral Services Manager / Officer**

## Appendix J

### Template letter to be passed on to individuals

All,

We have been made aware of some exciting opportunities to work at elections for [insert name of council]

They need people to work at **Polling Stations on Thursday 4 May 2023**. This will involve checking voters are entitled to vote and issuing ballot papers. You are required to work from **6:30am** until shortly after 10pm.

They also need people to **count the votes**. This will take place at [*insert venue*] from [*insert time*].

The council is looking for people who:

- can act professionally and impartially
- can follow instructions and
- have good customer service skills

More information about the roles, including details about payment and how to apply are on the Council's website. [*insert link*]

Yours sincerely

Organisation Manager/Officer



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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Rule 26 (1) Sch 1, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983); Rule 24(1) Sch 2, Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (PAR 2006); Rule 24(1) Sch 2, Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (PCR 2006); ); Rule 30 (1) Sch 1, Local Elections (Principal Areas) (Wales) Rules 2006 (PAR 2021); Rule 30(1) Sch 1, Local Elections (Communities) (Wales) Rules 2021 (CR 2021); Rule 23 (1) Sch 1, Scottish Local Government Elections Order 2011 (SLGEO 2011)

<sup>2</sup> [Some Returning Officers struggled to find enough staff to work on polling day and at the count](#) – Electoral Commission, Report on the May 2022 local elections in England;

<sup>3</sup> [Many Returning Officers struggled to recruit and retain enough poll staff](#) – Electoral Commission, Report on the May 2022 Scottish council elections;

[Returning Officers struggled to recruit enough staff to work in the polling station](#) - Electoral Commission, Report on the May 2022 elections in Wales

<sup>4</sup> Rule 26 (1) Sch 1, Representation of the People Act 1983 (RPA 1983); Rule 24(1) Sch 2, Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (PAR 2006); Rule 24(1) Sch 2, Local Elections (Parishes and Communities) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (PCR 2006); ); Rule 30 (1) Sch 1, Local Elections (Principal Areas) (Wales) Rules 2006 (PAR 2021); Rule 30(1) Sch 1, Local Elections (Communities) (Wales) Rules 2021 (CR 2021); Rule 23 (1) Sch 1, Scottish Local Government Elections Order 2011 (SLGEO 2011)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/england-local-council-elections/report-may-2022-local-elections-england>

<sup>6</sup> Regulation 5A of the Working Time Regulations 1998 requires that 16- and 17-year-olds must not work more than 8 hours a day – there is no opt out as there is for adults. The same applies in Scotland and Wales, through exceptional circumstances can apply – including if no-one over 18 is available to do the work and providing any education or training will not suffer.