

Report of the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland 2008-2009

*Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 9(1) of the Northern Ireland
(Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006*

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 29 October 2009

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Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland Report for the Year 2008–2009

The Rt Hon Shaun Woodward MP
Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Office
11 Millbank
London
SW1P 4QE

28 August 2009

Dear Secretary of State

I have the honour, in accordance with section 9(1) of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006, to present this Report on how I have discharged my functions for the year ending 31 March 2009.

Yours sincerely



*Douglas Bain CBE TD Advocate
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland*

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FOREWORD

The year covered by this Report was highly unusual in that it was the second successive year in which no Northern Ireland wide election was held. This last occurred in 1991–1992.

The absence of a Northern Ireland wide election brought both challenges and opportunities. It was, for example, much more straightforward to successfully replace the tired Electoral Office IT system and to build on the work on customer service undertaken last year. That work resulted in the award of Charter Mark early in the reporting year and its confirmation for a further year in April 2009.

But the absence of a major election made maintaining the comprehensiveness of the electoral register more difficult. The political parties, who make a significant contribution ahead of an election, were less active and there was less public interest in registration.

It is accordingly particularly pleasing that in addition to meeting all 4 of the Targets and 27 of the 30 remaining Development Objectives there had, by the year end, been a net increase of 2.8% in the registered electorate.

These very significant achievements would not have been possible without the continued dedicated work of all my colleagues in the Electoral Office and the support received from many other quarters some of whom are recognised in the body of the Report. I am most grateful to all of them.



Douglas Bain CBE TD Advocate
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

28 August 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

Electoral Administration in Northern Ireland

- 1.1** The arrangements for electoral administration in Northern Ireland are different from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The system in Northern Ireland is administered centrally by the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland ('the CEO') who is a statutory office holder independent of Government. He is assisted by the staff of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland ('EONI'), the administrative structure created to support him in the discharge of his duties. The CEO is both the electoral registration officer for all 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland and returning officer for all elections and referendums in that jurisdiction. His main duties and responsibilities are set out in the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (as amended by Article 6 of the Electoral Law (Northern Ireland) Order 1972), the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006. The Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Office is responsible to Parliament for all expenditure incurred by the CEO.

Role of the Chief Electoral Officer

- 1.2** The main duties of the CEO are:
- to act as electoral registration officer for all constituencies in Northern Ireland;
 - to act as returning officer for all elections and referendums in Northern Ireland;
 - to recommend to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by 16 April each year whether or not a registration canvass should be conducted;
 - to act as an assessor to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland;
 - to act as an assessor to the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner; and
 - to lead and manage EONI.
- 1.3** The CEO is required to report to the Secretary of State on an annual basis on how he has discharged his functions. Section 9(2) of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires him to include in his Report an assessment of the extent to which the relevant registration objectives in Northern Ireland have been met in the year to which the report relates.

Role of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland

- 1.4** EONI is the name given to the group of permanent and casual staff who support the CEO in the performance of his duties. It has no separate statutory existence or responsibilities. It operates from a headquarters building in Belfast and area offices in Belfast (co-located with Headquarters) and six other locations across Northern Ireland.

Role of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

- 1.5** In Northern Ireland electoral matters are excepted, meaning that they are not devolved to the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Secretary of State is responsible to Parliament for electoral law and policy including:
- maintaining the legal framework that is necessary for elections to the European Parliament, the United Kingdom Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and to district councils;
 - funding the CEO;
 - providing staffing and other resources necessary to maintain the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland; and
 - consulting as necessary with the CEO and the Electoral Commission on legislation and policy proposals.
- 1.6** The Secretary of State is supported in this role by the Minister of State and officials from the Rights, Elections and Legacy Division of the Northern Ireland Office (NIO).

Role of the Electoral Commission

- 1.7** The Electoral Commission is an independent body set up by Parliament under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000. Its aim is integrity and public confidence in the democratic process. It also regulates party and election finance and in Great Britain set standards for well-run elections and electoral registration.
- 1.8** The Commission's corporate plan, published in 2009, set out its strategic direction over the next five years. The aim and objectives of the plan are underpinned by two key priorities – demonstrating and enhancing its effectiveness as a regulator of party and election finance and leading the drive for increasingly high standards of electoral administration, including electoral registration. The Commission's corporate objectives for the period 2009-10 to 2013-14 are:
- integrity and transparency of party and election finance
 - complete and accurate electoral registers supported by a well-run electoral registration process
 - well-run elections and referendums which produce results that are accepted
 - fair boundary arrangements for elections in England.

1.9 The Commission has a range of functions in Northern Ireland. Its key role is to monitor and regulate party and election finance, including donations and loans to political parties and regulated donees. It also has a statutory duty to report on the main elections in Northern Ireland. The Commission also undertakes public awareness activities in connection with electoral registration and elections. It has no executive functions in relation to the registration of electors or the conduct of elections. These are the sole responsibility of the CEO.

Funding Arrangements

1.10 The salary costs of the CEO, as an independent statutory officeholder, are met from the Consolidated Fund. His operating costs, except for the costs of running elections, are funded by the Northern Ireland Office. The cost of European and United Kingdom parliamentary elections are met by HM Treasury whilst the cost of any Northern Ireland Assembly elections is found from the Northern Ireland block. District councils meet the cost of their own elections.

2. PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS

- 2.1** This section summarises the performance achieved against the four Targets and 31 Development Objectives set out in the Business Plan 2008/09 which can be viewed at www.eoni.org.uk.
- 2.2** The four Targets were achieved in full.
- 2.3** Of the 31 Development Objectives 27 were achieved in full. Work on one, relating to anonymous registration, was suspended when the Northern Ireland Office postponed the introduction of the relevant legislation. The objective relating to the new IT system was achieved after a delay of 6 weeks whilst the objective relating to procurement processes suffered slippage of nearly 6 months due to other higher priority work. In neither instance was there any adverse impact on business performance. The challenging target of referring 50 cases of failing to provide information to the police was not met largely because the publicity surrounding its announcement resulted in a much improved level of compliance. Another factor was the difficulty experienced in effecting personal service of the formal document requiring the provision of information.
- 2.4** Further details of performance against Targets and Development Objectives are at Annex A.

3. REGISTRATION

Statistics

- 3.1** The new register published on 1 December 2008 showed a net increase of 16,568 in the electorate compared with the register published on 3 December 2007. By 31 March 2009 there had been a further net increase of 11,681 individuals, largely due to the “Schools Initiative” described in paragraphs 3.10 to 3.13 below, bringing the total electorate to 1,154,228.
- 3.2** These net increase figures do not reflect the true volume of work undertaken to maintain the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the register. During the year a total of 130,175 changes were made to the register, an increase of 23% compared with 2007/08.

Continuous Registration

- 3.3** In the absence of any Northern Ireland wide election the focus of work during the year was the registration of electors by means of the continuous registration process commenced in January 2007 following the abolition of the annual canvass.

Provision of Information by Public Authorities

- 3.4** The success of the continuous registration process was dependent to a large extent on the provision of information by specified public authorities in accordance with regulations 41 and 42 of the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008. During the year useful information was received from the Northern Ireland Central Services Agency (now the Business Service Organisation) (“the CSA”), the Department of Work and Pensions (“the DWP”), the Registrar General for Northern Ireland, post-primary schools and from district councils.

Central Services Agency

- 3.5** The CSA provided, on five occasions during the year, information on individuals who according to their records had changed address. As a result of this information letters and registration forms were sent to nearly 155,000 individuals inviting them to update their registration particulars. More than 43,300 responses were received as a result of which 8,482 individuals were added to the register and the addresses of a further 15,583 were updated. In some of the other cases the individuals concerned had updated their particulars before receiving the letter whilst in others it transpired that the individuals had not in fact changed their address.

Department of Work and Pensions

- 3.6** The DWP provided the customary annual update of names, addresses, dates of birth and national insurance numbers of those over 17 years of age resident in Northern Ireland. In addition to the service provided in previous years the DWP provided quarterly updates of information on those attaining 17 years of age.

- 3.7** The information received was used principally to check the national insurance numbers given on registration applications and other electoral forms. The requirement to provide national insurance numbers on various electoral documentation was introduced as a counter-fraud measure and the information provided by DWP secured its efficacy.
- 3.8** Following discussions with the DWP it was agreed that they would, for the first time, allow Electoral Office staff access to a database of individuals resident in Northern Ireland. Following testing of this new facility and the putting in place of the necessary procedures and safeguards staff, in all Area Electoral Offices were able to access the database. This new facility significantly increased their ability to verify name, address and date of birth information given on registration application forms and in many cases eliminated altogether the need to ask applicants to produce documents to vouch the information they provide. This significantly reduced the complexity of the registration process and allowed applicants to be added to the register much more quickly.

Deaths

- 3.9** The Registrar General for Northern Ireland continued to provide weekly lists of deceased persons. In addition to this statutory provision of information the Senior Coroner kindly agreed to provide monthly lists for those whose death had been referred to him. Such deceased persons are not included in the lists provided by the Registrar General until a death certificate has been issued which in some cases may be a considerable period after the date of death. Further, the Registrar General's counterpart in Ireland kindly agreed to provide details of persons resident in Northern Ireland whose death had been registered in Ireland. In all cases the information provided was checked against the electoral register and anyone found to be registered was removed. During the year 11,818 deceased persons were removed from the electoral register.

Schools

- 3.10** As a result of an amendment to the regulations the CEO was, for the first time, empowered to request post-primary schools to provide him with lists of the names, addresses and dates of birth of pupils of registration age. This power was considered necessary because an unforeseen consequence of the abolition of the annual canvass had been a dramatic drop in the number of young people on the register. Following the 2006 canvass there were only 244 "attainers" (those under 18 years of age) on the register compared with a norm in excess of 10,000 persons previously.
- 3.11** To address this issue the theme of Electoral Registration Week 2008 was registering young people particularly those still at school. The week was launched at Priory Integrated College, Holywood by Catriona Ruane MLA, the Minister of Education, who addressed pupils from the College and a number of local schools before inviting them to register. The event obtained substantial media coverage which doubtless encouraged further young people and other schools to co-operate fully with what came to be known as the "Schools Initiative".

- 3.12** Prior to attending at Priory Integrated College the principal had, like all other secondary school principals, been requested to provide the relevant pupil information. This was checked against the electoral register and electoral registration forms were partially completed by EONI staff for all the pupils who were not registered. Later in the year similar letters were sent to the principals of all special schools with pupils of registration age.
- 3.13** Each school was then contacted and invited to allow the Electoral Office to visit at a mutually convenient time to allow the pupils to check and sign the forms and to have their photographs taken for an electoral identity card. All but a handful of schools co-operated fully with the Initiative to the benefit of their pupils and of the democratic process. By the year end visits had been made to 95% of post-primary schools across Northern Ireland. The number of attainers registered peaked at 13,346 in January 2009 and then declined as the pupils reached 18 years of age and became eligible to vote.
- 3.14** Lessons have been learned from this work and it is intended to run a similar initiative, building on the success achieved in 2008/09, in the coming year.

District Councils

- 3.15** District councils continued to provide useful information on residential properties within their council areas. That information was used to update the EONI property database so that residential properties at which no one was registered could be targeted. In the coming year work will be undertaken to see if POINTER, an address database administered by the Land and Properties Services, providing a common standard address for all property in Northern Ireland, can fulfil the same function so reducing the administrative burden on councils.

Registration Form

- 3.16** To simplify the process for applicants it was decided to dispense with a separate electoral identity card application form and to include a box on the registration form to be ticked by those who wished also to apply for a card. This new form was successfully piloted during the Schools Initiative and introduced for all registrations at the year end. This new approach also made it possible for individuals to download from the EONI website the appropriate form to apply for an electoral identity card. Previously, due to technical difficulties, this had not been possible.
- 3.17** Registration forms were widely available. Bulk supplies were provided on request to political parties and other organisations. In addition to the forms issued following receipt of information from the CSA (paragraph 3.5 above) and the Schools Initiative (paragraphs 3.10 to 3.14 above) around 3,000 forms were issued during the mini canvass (paragraph 3.22 below). 4,614 forms were issued as a result of calls to the Helpline. Nearly 15,000 forms were downloaded from the EONI website. Of these 11,495 were in English whilst the remainder were in the languages shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Registration forms downloaded in other languages

Language	No. Forms downloaded
Polish	1,094
Portuguese	941
Filipino	265
Ulster Scots	227
Lithuanian	150
Romanian	144
Irish	126
Latvian	84
Slovak	78
Tetum	75
Russian	71
Traditional Chinese	33
Simplified Chinese	16
Total	3,304

3.18 No stock of forms in languages other than English was maintained so that other than the initial translation costs, which were minimal, this extra service cost no more than the provision of the English version of the form.

Electoral Identity Cards

3.19 During the year 4,548 cards were issued in the normal way. A modified streamlined process for issuing cards was put in place to deal with the nearly 13,000 issued during the Schools Initiative. The total cost of cards issued during the year was £89,242.

3.20 Towards the end of the year it was decided to bring the card production process in-house with effect from 1 April 2009. Following discussions the contract with the existing provider, who had provided an excellent service since the introduction of electoral identity cards in 2003, was terminated on satisfactory terms. All the arrangements necessary for in-house production were completed enabling production to commence on 1 April 2009. It is assessed that the new arrangements will reduce the period from the receipt of the completed application to provision of the card from around 3 weeks to not more than 7 days. It will also result in savings of around £70k in a full year.

Free Prize Draw

3.21 The Free Prize Draw was launched for a pilot period of one year on 7 March 2008. The first draw was made by the Lord Mayor of Belfast on 14 August with further draws being made by the Mayors of Derry and Newry in November 2008 and February 2009. Significant media coverage was obtained. In the five months following the launch of the Draw the number of registration forms received increased nearly tenfold from 3,511 in 2007 to 34,297 for the same period in 2008. There is no doubt that the increased level of registration applications throughout the year was in part due to the Draw which appeared to be of particular interest to pupils during the Schools Initiative. The total expenditure on the Draw was less than £6k. Following an assessment of its impact HM Treasury gave permission to continue the Draw after the end of the pilot period.

New British Citizens

3.22 The CEO continued his practice of writing to all individuals who attended citizenship ceremonies at Hillsborough Castle congratulating them on their new status as British citizens and encouraging their electoral registration. During the year 269 individuals from 53 countries who were not already registered as electors were sent such letters and by 1 July 2009 89% of them had been registered. A further 108 individuals, mainly qualifying Commonwealth citizens, who were already on the register, were sent a letter confirming that the records relating to their nationality had been amended.

3.23 The previous nationalities of the 269 new electors are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Previous Nationalities of New British Electors

Philippines		Georgia	1
China	27	Afghanistan	1
India	21	Pakistan	1
Hong Kong	11	Romania	1
Zimbabwe	7	Switzerland	1
Turkey	7	Indonesia	1
Bulgaria	7	Libya	1
Ukraine	6	Tunisia	1
Kosovo	5	Taiwan	1
USA	5	Cuba	1
South Korea	4	Iraq	1
Belarus	4	Lebanon	1
Nigeria	4	Sudan	1
Thailand	3	Australia	1
Albania	3	Algeria	1

South Africa	3	Costa Rica	1
Brazil	2	Azerbaijan	1
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	2	Republic of Serbia	1
Morocco	2	Ghana	1
Canada	2	Colombia	1
Syria	2	Uganda	1
Ecuador	2	Nepal	1
Argentina	2	Western Sahara	1
Guyana	2	St Vincent & The Grenadines	1
Egypt	2	Republic of Moldova	1
Jamaica	2	Zambia	1
Japan	2		

Prisoners

3.24 The Area Electoral Officer and staff of the Londonderry Office worked closely with the Governor and staff at HMP Magilligan to encourage the registration of those being released from custody. During the year appropriate procedures were developed so that prisoners could be added to the electoral register and provided with an electoral identity card on discharge. The Prison Service has confirmed that this new arrangement, which is unique to Northern Ireland, aids the reintegration of individuals into the community and so reduces the risk of re-offending. EONI stands ready to extend the service to other Prison Service establishments pending the amendment of the Representation of the People Act 1983 to remove the current disenfranchisement of all sentenced prisoners.

3.25 During the year the CEO obtained from the Prison Service information on all sentenced prisoners. This information was checked against the electoral register and, where appropriate, action was taken to remove those serving a sentence from the register. A total of 55 individuals, who were not under the present law entitled to be on the register, were removed from it.

Incorrect National Insurance Numbers

3.26 As a result of checking the information given on registration forms against information on the DWP database letters were sent to 1,022 registered electors who appeared to have given an incorrect national insurance number on their form. The letters invited them to provide the correct information and advised them of where they could obtain their correct national insurance number. 387 individuals who failed to provide their correct national insurance number were removed from the register. The improved access to DWP information should eliminate the need for such work.

Dual Addresses

- 3.27** It is lawful for an individual to be registered at more than one address if he or she can be considered to be resident there. Such individuals can, of course, vote only once at any election. In June 2008 letters were sent to the 320 individuals with dual addresses asking them to justify their registrations. Where justification was not provided the second registration was deleted. Only 14 individuals were registered at more than one address at the year end.

National Fraud Initiative

- 3.28** In October 2008 the CEO announced his intention to participate in the National Fraud Initiative, a programme aimed at preventing and detecting public sector fraud. The Initiative, which had uncovered more than £140m worth of suspected fraud since its launch in Great Britain in 1996, was being extended to Northern Ireland. Under it a number of public sector bodies in Northern Ireland provided information on their “customers” to the Northern Ireland Audit Office who had it compared electronically to identify suspicious matches such as a deceased person still claiming a pension. Whilst the aim is to prevent and detect fraud it is likely that the initiative will also identify instances where address details on the electoral register do not correspond with those on another database. Where that is so appropriate action will be taken to check the accuracy of the information on the register. The results from the first data matching exercise were received outside the reporting period.

EU and Other Elections

- 3.29** Following the work at the Polish and Romanian elections in Northern Ireland in the last reporting year staff from the Banbridge A Area Electoral Office were present to encourage registration at the polling station in Armagh for the Lithuanian elections in October 2008. Turnout at the elections was poor and only two registration forms were returned. In view of this low response rate, which mirrored that at the elections in the previous year, it is unlikely that EONI staff will be present at future elections in Northern Ireland for EU Member States.
- 3.30** In addition to being present at the election assistance was given to the Lithuanian Honorary Consul, who was responsible for the conduct of the election, by the loan of polling station equipment. Similar assistance was given to a number of schools for school council elections. This kind of assistance will continue as a way both of encouraging participation in elections and of familiarising EU nationals and pupils with what to expect when going to vote in Northern Ireland.

Presence at Party Conferences

- 3.31** Following a request made at a meeting of the Assembly Parties Panel the CEO agreed to provide a stand at the annual conference of any party who requested it. The purpose was to provide delegates with information on registration and other electoral matters. The offer was taken up by the UUP and SDLP. The number of enquires handled was

disappointingly low and the cost of employing staff out of hours makes it unlikely that this service will be offered in future.

Mini Canvasses

- 3.32** A further initiative to maintain the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the register was the pilot mini canvasses conducted in nine wards or part wards between June and December 2008. The areas canvassed were selected because they were known either to have a low level of registration or to have had substantial new residential development. Four different methods of conducting the canvass were tested.
- 3.33** The outcome of the pilot was a significant increase in the accuracy of the register but at the price of a reduction in its comprehensiveness. More than 1,000 new electors were added to the register whilst nearly 460 electors notified changes to their name or address. Against that more than 2,600 individuals were removed from the register either because they were no longer resident at their registered address or because they ignored, despite several reminders, the requirement to provide information. This 8.2% reduction in the registration level, whilst disappointing, is not surprising. It is in line with the reductions experienced following annual canvasses.
- 3.34** It is intended to conduct further mini canvasses, modified to take account of lessons learned, prior to the next General Election.

Multiple Occupancy Reviews

- 3.35** The Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008 provided the CEO with new powers to review the entitlement of a person to remain on the electoral register. Such powers, which replicate those in Great Britain, are particularly necessary in Northern Ireland where the absence of an annual canvass could result in the register quickly becoming inaccurate.
- 3.36** It became apparent that on occasion two or more families, only one of which was actually living there, were registered at the same address. That appears to have arisen because when a new family moved to an address and were registered there the family formerly resident there failed to notify EONI of their move or to register at their new address. Procedures were introduced to ensure that when a family unit was registered at a new address a check was made of the entitlement of any other family unit to be registered there.
- 3.37** To deal with the cases that had occurred before the new procedures were put in place, and to address the issue of houses where the number of persons registered appeared inconsistent with the size of the property, the CEO decided to review the entitlement to be registered of all persons registered at an address where eight or more were registered. The review letter sent to these individuals made clear the action that they were required to take and explained that if they failed to respond they would, in accordance with the Regulations, be removed from the electoral register. 2,166 letters were issued as a result of which 135 changes of address were notified, one person was added to the register and 16 persons, who were either deceased or no longer

resident in Northern Ireland, were removed from it. 954 individuals confirmed their entitlement to be registered at the address shown on the register. 1,090 failed to make any response to the letter and were removed from the register. Of that number some are known to have left Northern Ireland whilst others are likely to have moved to another address without informing EONI. Others appeared simply to have ignored the letter, despite the clear warning of the consequences given in it, and were removed from the register. When EONI obtained the ability to search the DWP database for Northern Ireland all those who had been removed from the register, but who according to that database were resident at the qualifying address, were reinstated to the register. This first phase of the initiative resulted in the registration particulars of nearly 7% of those written to being updated.

- 3.38** Phase 2 of the initiative involved sending the same letter to those registered at address at which seven or more individuals were registered. 5,510 letters were issued. As a result 290 address changes were notified and 21 persons who were either deceased or no longer resident in Northern Ireland were removed from the register. Those who ignored the letter and who, according to the DWP database, were not resident at their qualifying address were removed from the register.

Home Movers Initiative

- 3.39** The accuracy and comprehensiveness of the registers was again boosted by the Home Movers Initiative undertaken by the Electoral Commission. Under it the Commission wrote to individuals who, according to information procured by the Commission, had changed their address. The letter sent invited them to complete and return a registration form.
- 3.40** During the year 25,972 registration forms were received by the Electoral Office resulting in 6,914 electors having their addresses updated and 3,559 electors being added to the register. The fact that more than 50% of the forms received resulted in no change to the register was largely due to the fact that the individuals concerned had already updated their registration particulars often as a result of receiving a CSA letter.
- 3.41** In light of the effectiveness of the CSA letters as a means of maintaining the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the register in Northern Ireland and to avoid duplication of effort, the Electoral Commission has decided to discontinue the Home Movers Initiative in Northern Ireland.

Other Registration Work

- 3.42** A variety of other work was undertaken to encourage registration and to maintain the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the register. This included work with the ethnic minorities and those in residential care, provision of registration forms to the Probation Board for Northern Ireland for distribution to their clients, presentations to community groups and registration events held in locations remote from Area Electoral Offices. Further details of this valuable work can be found in Section 7 of this Report.

Changes to Legislation

- 3.43** The CEO and his staff work closely with officials of the Northern Ireland Office on a number of important legislative changes.
- 3.44** The Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008, which came into force on 1 July 2008, replaced all existing secondary legislation on electoral registration thus making it much easier for anyone to find the current law. The regulations made a number of changes to the law arising from the Electoral Administration Act 2006 including the introduction of “late registration” for Westminster elections in Northern Ireland. As a result of this change individuals were enabled to register up until 11 days prior to an election. Under the previous law the deadline for registration could be up to six weeks before polling day.
- 3.45** The 2008 Regulations also made important changes to the documents that could be produced to prove identity at a polling station for a Westminster election. The War Disabled SmartPass, Blind Persons SmartPass and 60+ SmartPass were added to the list of acceptable documents whilst the requirement that the document produced had to be current on polling day was removed. The Regulations also made changes to the law on absent voting and on access to the electoral register as well as making a number of technical amendments.
- 3.46** The Northern Ireland Assembly (Elections) (Amendment) Order 2009 came into force on 10 February 2009. The Order introduced new arrangements for the filling of a vacancy caused by the death, resignation or disqualification of a MLA. It also brought the law on registration in time to vote at an Assembly election into line with the new provisions for Westminster elections. Further the Order made changes to the procedure at Assembly election including a welcome extension of the time allowed for the nomination of candidates.
- 3.47** The close working continued in relation to the European Parliamentary Elections (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 which came into force on 27 March 2009. These regulations amended the law for the European Parliamentary Elections to take account of many of the changes made in relation to Westminster and Northern Ireland Assembly elections.
- 3.48** Work was also undertaken on a number of other provisions.

Evidence Requirements

- 3.49** The evidence requirements introduced in early 2008 were modified in light of experience gained to make compliance easier for applicants without the weakening the safeguards against electoral fraud and identity theft that they provided. Direct access to the DWP database (paragraph 3.8 above) removed the need for any additional evidence in a significant proportion of applications.

Meeting the Registration Objectives

3.50 Under section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 the CEO is required to include in his annual Report an assessment of the extent to which the relevant registration objectives have been met.

3.51 These objectives are set out in Section 10ZB of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and are –

“to secure, so far as reasonably practicable –

- (a) that every person who is entitled to be registered in a register is registered in it,
- (b) that no person who is not entitled to be registered in a register is registered in it, and
- (c) that none of the required information relating to any person registered in a register is false.”

First Registration Objective

3.52 The total electorate on 1 December 2008 was 1,142,547. The Registrar General and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency advised that the estimated eligible population on that date was 1,366,990. The register published on 1 December 2008 was, on that basis, 83.4% comprehensive. The apparent reduction of 0.1% over the year is well within the margin of error and is not significant.

3.53 The ways in which it is intended to offer those individuals who are not registered the opportunity to so do are outlined in the Electoral Office Business Plan 2009/10 which can be viewed at www.eoni.org.uk.

3.54 It must, however, be accepted that there are some individuals who take a conscious decision not to register. When challenged about their attitude reasons given have included a total lack of interest in politics, a lack of trust in politicians and fear of having their addresses discovered by family members, debt collectors or the law enforcement agencies. Whilst these individuals will continue to be given every encouragement to register it is, at present, their right not to so do.

Second Registration Objective

3.55 An independent assessment of the accuracy of the December 2007 register, undertaken on behalf of the Electoral Commission, was published on 15 September 2008. It concluded that the revised register was 94.3% accurate.

3.56 Unfortunately the Commission was unable to undertake a similar survey in relation to the register published on 1 December 2008. There is, accordingly, no statistical basis on which to make an assessment of its accuracy. However, there is no reason to believe that it is significantly different from the previous year. That view is taken

on the basis of the work, outlined above, undertaken during the year to maintain its accuracy. Further support for the view that the register remained at a high level of accuracy was provided after the end of the reporting period by the very small number of poll cards for the European Parliamentary Elections which were returned by Royal Mail as “gone away”.

Third Registration Objective

- 3.57** The evidence requirements and the other measures described above have together given significant assurances that the information held on the register of electors is accurate.

Assessment

- 3.58** The December 2008 register was 2.5% more comprehensive than the one published after the last annual canvass in December 2006. There is no reason to believe that any significant number of individuals have been able to thwart the proportionate controls in place and to register when not entitled so to do. The controls now in place give assurance that the information held is accurate. It is assessed that the statutory registration objectives have, to a large extent, been met.

Recommendation about a Canvass

- 3.59** Under Section 10ZA of the Representation of the People Act 1983 it is open to the CEO to recommend to the Secretary of State that a full canvass should take place earlier than the next scheduled date in 2010. Such a recommendation would be justified only where there was reason to believe that a canvass would result in the publication of a register that was substantially more accurate or comprehensive or both than the existing register. The December 2008 register was 2.5% more comprehensive than the register published in 2006 following the last annual canvass. History has shown that a canvass is likely to result in a decline of up to 10% in the electorate. Given that the public are now unaccustomed to completing a canvass form each year the decline at the next canvass could be even greater. It was therefore reasonable to assume that a full canvass in 2009 would have resulted in a significant reduction in the comprehensiveness of the register. There was no reason to believe that the 2008 register was any less accurate than the 2006 register: indeed, the introduction of the evidence requirements in early 2008 are likely to have contributed to an increased level of accuracy. On that basis the CEO did not recommend to the Secretary of State that a canvass should take place in autumn 2009.

4. ELECTIONS

Northern Ireland wide elections

- 4.1** There were no Northern Ireland wide elections during the period of this Report.

By-elections

- 4.2** The only by-election held in this period was in Enniskillen DEA of Fermanagh District Council on 17 September 2008. The Chief Executive of the Council was the Deputy Returning Officer. The staff of the Omagh Area Electoral Office dealt with the increased volume of applications to be added to the register, the processing of absent vote applications, the provision of equipment and materials and the staffing of polling stations on his behalf. The Area Electoral Officer provided advice to the Deputy Returning Officer on a wide range of matters connected with the election and conducted the training for the poll staff. The by-election was conducted efficiently by all concerned.

Election Preparation

- 4.3** Although the actual date of the European Parliamentary elections was not finalised until summer 2008 it was known that the elections would be held in June 2009. Work on preparing for them started in early 2008.
- 4.4** For these elections Northern Ireland was one of 12 electoral regions within the United Kingdom. Each was the responsibility of a Returning Officer. In Northern Ireland the CEO performed that function. To assist in the planning for the elections the Ministry of Justice established a monthly meeting of the 12 Returning Officers to discuss matters of mutual interest. The CEO attended the monthly meetings of the group.
- 4.5** He also chaired the EONI European Parliamentary Elections Working Group which met for the first time on 30 June 2008. The membership included representatives of the PSNI and the Electoral Commission along with key players within EONI. The Group agreed to meet bi-monthly initially with the frequency of the meetings being increased as the election approached.
- 4.6** Because Northern Ireland is one region for these elections and votes using the STV system of proportional representation, the actual counting of votes has to be undertaken centrally. At previous elections the verification of the votes had been undertaken at a number of locations across Northern Ireland. The premises used for the verification were usually leisure centres run by district councils. Their use for electoral purposes usually meant that they were closed to the public for a minimum of 48 hours resulting in inconvenience to the public and loss of income to the councils. To avoid these undesirable consequences it was decided at an early stage that the verification of the votes would be undertaken at the central count location. Following a procurement process it was decided that this would be the King's Hall in Belfast.

- 4.7 In February 2009 the CEO announced his intention to put in place robust measures to deal with perceived postal and proxy voting fraud at the forthcoming elections. He reaffirmed his view that, since the introduction of individual registration, the evidence requirements referred to in Section 3 above and the requirement to produce photographic identification when voting, there was now little risk of electoral fraud or personation at the polling station. The only significant weakness in the counter-fraud measures was in relation to postal and proxy voting where the same level of scrutiny was not the norm. It was decided to provide all staff involved with the processing of postal and proxy vote applications with very specific guidance on the checks to be carried out and to reject all applications that did not comply with the legal requirements. By the year end legal advice had been taken on some of the issues involved and all relevant staff had been briefed on the key features of signature recognition to equip them to identify potentially false signatures that needed consideration by a handwriting expert.
- 4.8 Other preparatory work undertaken included a review of all documentation and forms to reflect the many changes made to law and practice since the European Parliamentary elections in 2004 and visits to polling stations to check on their suitability particularly for voters with restricted mobility.

Alleged Electoral Offences

- 4.9 In the 2007/08 Report reference was made to the submission to the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) of a file in relation to allegedly false statements on a nomination paper at the 2007 Assembly election. Marcella McKnight, the Workers Party candidate for South Antrim, and Thomas Delaney, her election agent, subsequently pleaded guilty to contravention of section 65A of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and were fined £150 and £300 respectively.
- 4.10 Also referred to in that Report was a case of alleged failure to provide information to the registration officer. After trial at Antrim Magistrates Court on 3 March 2009, Ian D Withers was found guilty and fined 1p.
- 4.11 During the year 6 other cases of failure to provide information to the registration officer were referred to the police for investigation. In one case the complaint was withdrawn when the information was provided. In two of these cases by the time the PSNI investigation had been completed the cases were time barred and a no prosecution decision was issued by the PPS. In another case a formal warning was given. In one case the PPS decided to prosecute and the first court appearance is awaited. It has not yet been possible to ascertain the disposal of the sixth case which appears not to have been received from the PSNI by the PPS.
- 4.12 Numerous formal requisitions to provide information were issued during the year. In many cases these resulted in the information being provided. In a number of other cases, when other commitments and resources permitted, attempts were made to gather sufficient evidence to justify referral to the PSNI. For a successful prosecution it is necessary to satisfy the court that the formal requisition to provide

the information had been received by the elector. This is best done by personal service of the documents on the individual by a process server. Unfortunately it appears that many of those who fail in their duty to provide information are experienced in avoiding personal service of documents. As a result it was not practicable to proceed in many of the cases of failure.

- 4.13** One case of providing false information on a registration form was referred to the police for investigation. A report was submitted to the PPS and a decision that it was not in the public interest to prosecute was taken.
- 4.14** Using the formal prosecution process to deal with those who fail to provide information in contravention of regulation 24 of the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations is a costly and labour intensive process for EONI, the PSNI and the PPS. To streamline the process and to reduce the resources required the NIO were asked to consider the introduction of a fixed penalty option. Their response was awaited at the end of the reporting period.

5. CENTRAL SERVICES

Premises

- 5.1 Minor works were undertaken at a number of the premises to make them more suitable both for customers and staff. To improve the service for the increased number of individuals calling at Area Offices suitably equipped waiting areas were provided where practicable. New signs were erected at the Banbridge and Omagh Offices. Further information on these minor works is given in Section 7.

Staff

Staff Resignations and Appointments

- 5.2 During the year eight members of the permanent staff resigned their posts. Five of these individuals moved to other jobs and the lack of career opportunities within EONI was a significant factor in their decisions. The other three individuals left for personal or other reasons.
- 5.3 All vacancies occurring during the year were filled without difficulty following a public recruitment process. It was apparent that as the year progressed, and the economic situation worsened, the number of, and qualifications held by, applicants increased.

Status of Electoral Office Staff

- 5.4 The attempts to obtain Civil Service status for EONI staff were thwarted when it was made clear that transfer to the Northern Ireland Civil Service was not an option. In times of full employment the lack of career opportunities within EONI, which would have been resolved by Civil Service status, is likely to make it difficult to retain high quality staff. That will necessarily have an adverse impact on the ability of the CEO to continue to deliver a high class registration and elections service.
- 5.5 In the absence of Civil Service status it was decided to explore other, albeit less effective, ways of providing development opportunities for staff. Options identified included short to medium term secondments of staff to other public sector organisations and job exchanges within EONI. These will be progressed in 2009/10.

Restructuring and Re-grading

- 5.6 Following on the Job Evaluation and Grading Support (JEGS) reviews undertaken in 2007/08 the remainder of posts below Assistant Chief Electoral Officer were reviewed during the year and the recommended changes were implemented.
- 5.7 Additional registration officer posts were created where necessary to cope with the increased workload and to reduce the need to employ casual staff who lack the required breadth of knowledge. In all cases these additional posts were paid for from within the allocated budget.

- 5.8** The structure at 1 April 2008 is at Annex B whilst the structure in place at 31 March 2008 is at Annex C.

Training

- 5.9** Each member of staff drew up a personal development plan in consultation with his or her line manager. These individual plans were consolidated into an Electoral Office Training Plan which was considered and approved by the Board. Where external training was required it was procured centrally to secure best value for money.
- 5.10** All staff were brought together for training on 3 days during the year. Subjects covered included changes to the law on registration, the procedure and law for the European Elections and equality issues. All premises closed for public business to facilitate this necessary training. By the end of the year 100% of the agreed Training Plan had been completed.
- 5.11** A significant new development during the year was the introduction in Northern Ireland of the Association of Electoral Administrators qualifications. These qualifications, which have been available in Great Britain for several years, had not been extended to Northern Ireland because of the significant differences in electoral law and practice. Following discussions with the Association it was agreed in 2007/08 to make them available in Northern Ireland.
- 5.12** During the year 30 members of EONI staff and 2 staff of the Electoral Commission undertook the Foundation Course. A further 5 members of staff commenced the programme of work for the Certificate in Electoral Administration. All the training material was prepared by the Assistant Chief Electoral Officer (Elections) who delivered all the training sessions in addition to undertaking her normal duties.

Sick Absence

- 5.13** During the year staff sick absence levels were monitored by the Board at all its meetings. At the year end the average number of days lost per staff member due to sick absence was 6.7 days (3.0%) one of the lowest level in the public sector in Northern Ireland. If non-work related long-term absences are excluded the figure was 3.7 days (1.7%).

Funding

- 5.14** The total funding provided to the Electoral Office for 2008/09 was £3.3m. Details of the expenditure are at Annex D.
- 5.15** The cost of running elections is dealt with separately from the cost of running the Electoral Office. A separate account is opened for each election. The account for the 2007 Northern Ireland Assembly Elections was closed on 30 June 2008 so that at the year end there were no election accounts open.

- 5.16** Discussions took place with the Northern Ireland Office on a new way of calculating the amount available to pay for the European Parliamentary Elections in June 2009. By the year end these were well advanced and a bid for a budget of £2.4m had been submitted.

Stakeholder and Media Relations

Media

- 5.17** Although sole responsibility for public awareness of registration and elections lay with the Electoral Commission, the CEO and his staff made full use of the media to inform the public of significant developments in these areas.
- 5.18** During the year the CEO issued 11 press releases many of which resulted in significant coverage by the broadcast or written media. He gave a total of 62 media interviews in the course of the year. Press releases and interviews were also given by a number of the Area Electoral Officers to supplement the work of the CEO and to give information on more local stories.
- 5.19** Throughout the year invaluable support was again given by the staff of the Northern Ireland Information Service which is an integral part of the Northern Ireland Office. Preliminary discussion took place on how media support would be provided following the devolution of policing and criminal justice.

Political Parties

- 5.20** The CEO and his staff continued their practice of being available for discussion with all elected representatives and all parties.
- 5.21** The CEO again attended all meetings of the Assembly Parties Panel convened by the Electoral Commission and briefed its members on developments and initiatives being undertaken by his colleagues in the Electoral Office. The Northern Ireland political parties were included in all consultation exercises undertaken.

Electoral Commission

- 5.22** The CEO had the benefit of a good and productive relationship with Dr Henrietta Campbell, the Electoral Commissioner with special responsibility for Northern Ireland, and with the staff in the Commission's Belfast Office. He met with Dr Campbell on a regular basis and was in contact or met with the staff of the Belfast Office several times each week.
- 5.23** The CEO continued to attend meetings of the Electoral Leadership Forum, the group established by the Electoral Commission at which senior electoral administrators from across the UK had an opportunity to discuss issues with each other, the Commission and representatives of the Ministry of Justice.

Disability Groups

- 5.25** In June 2008 EONI published a booklet giving information on the adjustments made to electoral law and practice to assist those with a disability. The provision of such a booklet was another first for Northern Ireland in the field of electoral administration.
- 5.26** Publication of the booklet was timed to coincide with a number of important changes to electoral law to assist those with a disability to play their full part in the democratic process. Amongst these was the removal of the dated common law provision on mental capacity which prevented some individuals from registering and voting. A further welcome change was the addition to the list of documents that could be produced to prove identity at polling stations of the War Disabled SmartPass and the Blind Persons SmartPass.

Northern Ireland Office

- 5.27** The excellent working relationship with the Northern Ireland Office, and in particular the Elections Unit there, continued throughout the year. Areas in which there was close liaison included proposals for legislative amendments and the arrangements for funding the European Parliamentary Elections.

Presentations

- 5.28** Area Electoral Officers and their staff made presentations on a variety of subjects to a wide range of organisations during the year.

Helpline

- 5.29** The Helpline, based at Headquarters, continued to provide a high class customer focused service. During the year in excess of 37,000 calls, an increase of more than 85% from the previous year, were taken. Despite this huge increase in volume the staff continued to exceed the customer service standards for answering calls.
- 5.30** In March 2009 additional casual staff were employed to deal with the increased level of calls prior to the end of the late registration period for the European elections.

Website

- 5.31** The Electoral Office website received 113,586 visits during the year an increase of more than 41% compared with 2007/08. The home page was updated regularly to give the latest news from EONI accompanied, where possible, by pictures.

Records Management

- 5.32** The review of the TRIM Document Management System commenced in 2007/08 was completed and minor adjustments were made to internal procedures.

- 5.33** The CEO's Publication Scheme was revised in line with the Information Commissioner's Model Scheme. As a result much more information was made available to the public on-line.
- 5.34** A Records Disposal Schedule was drawn up, agreed with the Public Records Office for Northern Ireland, and implemented.
- 5.35** During the year 19 subject access requests under the Data Protection Act and 9 requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act were received. All were dealt with within the statutory timetables.

IT System

- 5.36** In August 2008 the existing network, which was overloaded and slow was replaced by a fully managed IPVPN quality of service network based on MPLS technology. This new network produced the desired improvements. It cost £84,369.
- 5.37** The IT systems, including the servers, area network, personal computers and printers in use, were reaching the end of their service life and could no longer be covered under the maintenance contract. Following a rigorous tendering exercise the provider for a new solution was identified.
- 5.38** That solution used the latest technology which not only resulted in a much improved service but also in reduced energy costs. New personal computers, using Windows Vista and MS Office 2007 software, were brought into use along with new printers capable of carrying out copying, scanning and faxing functions. As a result of this multifunctional printer solution the number of printers across EONI was reduced from 40 to 10 and a number of scanners and fax machines will be removed from service when staff become familiar with the new technology. The reduction in a number of machines freed up space within the offices as well as leading to energy efficiency savings. The new solution incorporated a Disaster Recovery Site equipped to enable EONI to continue to function effectively in the event of a systems failure at Headquarters. The total cost of the new solution was £463,000

6. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Management Board

- 6.1** The Management Board continued to meet monthly or more often as required. It was comprised of the CEO, both Assistant Chief Electoral Officers and the Heads of both Corporate Services and Information Services. Two members of staff, who were NIPSA representatives, received copies of all Board papers and were invited to all the meetings.
- 6.2** In addition to taking all strategic business decisions, the Board took as standing items the review of performance against targets and development objectives, finance, staffing issues, risk management and complaints. The equality and human rights aspects of any matter were considered by the Board as part of the normal decision making process. The Board also evaluated all initiatives undertaken.

Charter Mark

- 6.3** As noted in last year's Report notification of the award of Charter Mark, the Government's national standard for excellence in customer service, was received in April 2008. The formal presentation was made at Belfast Castle in February 2009 by Nigel Dodds MP MLA, the then Minister for Finance and Personnel.
- 6.4** Organisations who achieve the Charter Mark award standard are required to undergo a rigorous annual re-assessment. To prepare for this a team of staff, with representatives from all parts of EONI, carried out a review of policies and practices having particular regard to the criteria in respect of which a partial compliance had been noted during the initial assessment. The re-assessment was completed shortly before the year end and in April 2009 the award of Charter Mark was confirmed for a further year.

Mystery Shopping

- 6.5** To provide a further independent check on the standard of customer care provided the Board engaged an independent organisation to undertake 'mystery shopping'. This involved individuals, posing as members of the public, calling unannounced at each Area Office seeking advice or assistance. Calls were also made to check on the service provided by the Helpline. The response to emails was also tested. Quarterly consolidated reports of performance were received, considered by the Board and shared with line managers and the staff concerned so that lessons could be learnt where appropriate.

Complaints

- 6.6** During the year the complaints process was revised to make it simpler for our customers. By far the majority of complaints were resolved informally to the satisfaction of those concerned. Only where that was not possible, or where the

individual elected to start the process without attempting informal resolution, was a formal complaint received.

- 6.7 In 2008/09 only 47 formal complaints were received. When it is considered that during the year the Electoral Office received nearly 124,000 registration applications and dealt with the public and other stakeholders on a huge number of other occasions that is a remarkably low figure. Information on these complaints is given in Table 3.

Table 3 – Formal Complaints Received 2008/09

Nature of Complaint	No.	Outcome
Registration evidence requirements/ tone of letter.	19	Evidence requirements and tone of letter revised.
Receipt of CSA letter/tone of letter.	13	Tone of letter revised.
Poor service provided by staff.	6	Apology issued/remedial action taken where applicable.
Receipt of multiple letters.	3	Explanation issued regarding receipt of data from multiple sources.
Incorrect address/post code on register.	2	Amended where applicable.
Council having to purchase electoral register.	1	Relevant legislation explained.
Press invited to school event without permission of head teacher.	1	Apology issued.
Ministers of religion not included on evidence declaration list of eligible signatories.	1	Explanation issued regarding eligible signatories.
Receipt of multiple occupancy letter.	1	Explanation issued.
Total	47	

6.8 All complaints were considered by the Board at each meeting and, where appropriate, corrective action was taken.

Equality

6.9 All equality issues are mainstreamed within EONI and were an inherent part of the decision making process throughout the organisation.

6.10 The annual Equality Progress Report was submitted to the Equality Commission in August 2008.

Disability Action Plan

6.11 The revised EONI Disability Action Plan was approved by the Board at its meeting in November 2008.

6.12 Amongst the actions taken during the year were –

- accessibility audits of all EONI premises with consequential work where required;
- work with the voluntary sector and others to secure so far as possible that those affected were aware of the changes to the law on mental capacity to register and to vote which came into force on 1 July 2008;
- a review of access to potential polling stations and where appropriate the identification of alternative premises with unrestricted access; and
- close liaison with Disability Action, RNIB and RNID on a range of subjects.

Good Relations Strategy

6.13 The Good Relations Strategy, drafted following a public consultation exercise, was approved by the Board in January 2009.

6.14 In the main it simply formalises existing practice within EONI on such matters as impartiality and respect for others irrespective of their gender, race, political or religious beliefs or other section 75 category and the taking of all opportunities to promote good relations between all individuals.

6.15 All staff received refresher training on equal opportunities and on the strategy in March 2009.

Corporate Social Responsibility

6.16 The commitment made by the Board to corporate social responsibility found effect when, at the February 2009 meeting, the Board approved a policy and related action plan.

6.17 Corporate social responsibility involves integrating business values to meet the expectations of customers, suppliers, staff, other stakeholders and the environment. To that end the complaints process was revised and arrangements were put in place for the Board to review the outcome of all complaints on a regular basis. It was also decided to have a corporate charity each year and to facilitate staff to support it. Other actions agreed included the provision of free advice in relation to the conduct of elections by other non-profit making organisations, the loan of election equipment to such organisations and allowing staff special leave for one day each year to work in a voluntary capacity on a community project of their choice.

Internal Audit

6.18 The CEO and the Management Board continued to benefit from the constructive reports produced by ASM Horwath, our internal auditors.

6.19 During the year they continued with planned audits of the eight areas agreed by the Board as suitable for detailed examination. In all of these a satisfactory assurance rating was given.

6.20 The 22 recommendations made by the auditors were considered by the Management Board, who because of the small size of EONI acted as the audit committee. All but one of those recommendations was accepted and 17 were implemented almost immediately. The other four recommendations will be implemented at the earliest opportunity.

Boundaries

6.21 The CEO is an assessor to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland and the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner for Northern Ireland. During the year he attended a number of meetings with both the Commission and the Commissioner and provided them with information and advice to assist them in the discharge of their duties.

7. THE AREA OFFICES

Introduction

- 7.1 There were eight Area Electoral Offices that provided, other than the telephone Helpline at headquarters, the main point of contact for members of the public on electoral matters.
- 7.2 The locations of these offices and the constituencies for which they were responsible are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Area Electoral Offices

LOCATION	CONSTITUENCIES
Londonderry	Foyle East Londonderry
Ballymena	North Antrim Mid Ulster
Omagh	West Tyrone Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Banbridge A	Upper Bann Newry & Armagh
Banbridge B	South Down Lagan Valley
Newtownabbey	Belfast North East Antrim South Antrim
Newtownards	Belfast East Strangford North Down
Belfast	Belfast South Belfast West

- 7.3 Each office was managed by an Area Electoral Officer who was both the deputy registration officer and deputy returning officer for their constituencies. As such these officers had, under the supervision of the CEO, responsibility for all matters relating to electoral registration and for the conduct of free and fair elections to the Westminster Parliament, the European Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly. By law the Chief Executive of each district council was the deputy returning officer for any local government election. Each Area Electoral Officer was supported by an Assistant Area Electoral Officer and a number of registration officers appropriate to the workload of that office.

7.4 The following paragraphs give an insight into the work of each office during the year. In them a 'registration transaction' means any alteration to the electoral register or the issuing of a request for further information to enable an application to be processed. The number of registration applications received includes ineligible and duplicate applications.

Londonderry Area Electoral Office

7.5 The Londonderry Area Electoral Office is at 20 Queen Street, Londonderry. It serves the Foyle and East Londonderry constituencies.

7.6 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by five permanent staff. Additional casual staff were employed as required.

7.7 During the year the Office received 14,352 registration applications and completed 14,240 registration transactions. The electorate in the two constituencies increased by 4,091 (3.2%). There was a monthly average of 370 personal callers to the office.

7.8 In addition to the work carried out in all secondary schools in the area, elector registration was promoted at the annual ethnic minority event in Derry and at Fresher's Day at the North West Technical College at Derry and at Limavady. A link was established with NI Youth Organisations to promote registration awareness amongst young people across Northern Ireland. Information on registration is now available in their quarterly newsletter and their website has a permanent link to the homepage on the EONI website. In June 2008 a registration and electoral identity card clinic was run in Coleraine and a similar event was held for Irish Travellers in Derry in March 2009. In September 2008 visits to encourage registration and to assist individuals to complete registration forms were made to a number of nursing homes.

7.9 In the same month a mini-canvass of the Strand ward in Londonderry was undertaken.

7.10 The Area Electoral Officer and her staff were responsible for the innovative work to secure the registration of those being released from prison (paragraphs 3.24 and 3.25 above).

7.11 A new reception counter suitable for use by wheelchair users was installed and a waiting area was established in previously under-utilised space. The Office was redecorated.

Omagh Area Electoral Office

7.12 The Omagh Area Electoral Office is at 21 Kevlin Avenue, Omagh. It serves the West Tyrone and Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituencies.

7.13 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by three permanent staff and by casual staff during particularly busy periods.

- 7.14** During the year the Office received 12,912 registration applications and completed 15,467 registration transactions. The electorate in the two constituencies increased by 3,008 (2.4%). There was a monthly average of 135 personal callers to the office.
- 7.15** During the year visits were made to a total of 26 post-primary schools throughout the two geographically widespread constituencies. As a result 2172 students were added to the electoral register and a larger number were provided with an electoral identity card free of charge. Close contacts were maintained with interest groups representing migrant workers and a successful outreach visit was made to the STEP Centre in Dungannon with over 40 individuals being either added to the register or facilitated with an identity card.
- 7.16** A mini canvass of the Coolnagard Ward in Omagh was undertaken.
- 7.17** Planning permission for new signage was eventually granted. This enabled the public to find the Office more easily. A new DDA compliant public counter was installed.

Belfast Area Electoral Office

- 7.18** The Belfast Area Electoral Office is located on the first floor of the Electoral Office Headquarters at 15 Church Street, Belfast. It serves the Belfast South and Belfast West constituencies.
- 7.19** The Area Electoral Officer was supported by four permanent members of staff. Additional casual staff were employed as required.
- 7.20** During the year the Office received 15,628 registration applications and completed 17,145 registration transactions. The electorate in the two constituencies increased by 2,896 (2.9%). There was a monthly average of 583 personal callers to the office. This was by far the highest figure at any of the area offices and reflects the fact that many electors, registered outside the two constituencies for which the Belfast Office had responsibility, found it convenient to call there when in the city centre.
- 7.21** The mini canvass was held in the Rosetta ward of the Belfast South constituency in September.
- 7.22** Between September 2008 to January 2009, all year 13 and year 14 pupils in 22 post-primary schools, throughout the two constituencies, were covered in the Schools Initiative. As a result 1,787 students in these constituencies were added to the register and the majority of them were provided with an electoral identity card. A further 550 pupils who lived in other constituencies, but attended schools in those served by the Belfast Area Office, were also registered.
- 7.23** Registration clinics were held for a variety of groups including An Munia Tober, the community group serving the Irish Traveller community, the Simon Community and Regina Coeli. 36 new electors were registered following a visit to a West Belfast nursing home.

7.24 To cope with the large number of personal callers at the office the reception counter was re-positioned to provide a larger waiting area. Partial air conditioning was installed to enable the temperature at the counter to be maintained at an acceptable level for both customers and staff.

Banbridge A Area Electoral Office

7.25 The Banbridge A Area Electoral Office is co-located with the other Banbridge office at 52 Bridge Street, Banbridge. It has responsibility for the Upper Bann and Newry and Armagh constituencies.

7.26 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by two permanent members of staff with additional casual staff being employed as required.

7.27 During the year the Office received 18,071 registration applications and completed 22,509 registration transactions. The electorate in the two constituencies increased by 4,961 (3.4%). There was a monthly average of 184 personal callers at the premises occupied by the two Banbridge Offices

7.28 During the period 3 September to 19 November 2008 visits were made to 27 post-primary schools to encourage the registration of eligible pupils. Almost all eligible pupils were registered and most were provided with electoral identity cards. On 12 October 2008 staff from the Office were present at St. Patricks Grammar School, Armagh when it was used as a polling station for the Lithuanian elections. Information on electoral registration in Northern Ireland was given to the voters. The Office had a presence at the SDLP Conference in Armagh on 24 January 2009 to answer delegates' questions regarding registration matters. Other outreach activity included attendance at events in Killeavy and Armagh to encourage registration by Irish Travellers.

7.29 In June 2008 a mini-canvass of the Kernan Ward in Craigavon was undertaken.

7.30 The application submitted last year to erect modern signage to make it easier for the public to find the premises was eventually approved. The signage has been the subject of favourable comments from the public.

Banbridge B Area Electoral Office

7.31 The Banbridge B Area Electoral Office is co-located with the other Banbridge office at 52 Bridge Street, Banbridge. It serves the Lagan Valley and South Down constituencies.

7.32 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by three permanent members of staff with additional assistance, as required, from casual staff.

7.33 During the year the Office received 15,984 registration applications and completed 18,262 registration transactions. The electorate in the two constituencies increased

by 4,416 (3.1%). There was a monthly average of 184 personal callers to the two Banbridge Offices. Separate figures for each Office are not available.

- 7.34 A mini canvass of the Wallace Park ward in Lisburn was undertaken in June and July 2008.
- 7.35 Between September 2008 and January 2009 visits were made to post-primary schools in the constituencies in the course of the Schools Initiative. Almost all eligible pupils were registered and most were provided with electoral identity cards.
- 7.36 Visits were made to nursing homes in Newcastle, Castlewellan, Ballynahinch, Aghalee, Lisburn, Downpatrick, Warrenpoint, Rostrevor and Kilkeel to assist residents to complete registration forms and to give advice on absent voting.
- 7.37 Staff were present at Ballykinler Barracks and Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn to encourage registration by service personnel and their families.
- 7.38 A registration clinic was held in Newcastle in June 2008.
- 7.39 Assistance was provided to St. Malachy's High School, Castlewellan in the conduct of their school council elections in September 2008.

Newtownards Area Electoral Office

- 7.40 The Newtownards office at 2(B) Regent Street, Newtownards has since September 2007 been responsible for the North Down, Strangford and Belfast East constituencies.
- 7.41 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by four permanent members of staff with further casual staff being used at times of peak activity.
- 7.42 During the year the Office received 19,099 registration applications and completed 20,522 registration transactions. The electorate in the three constituencies served by the Office increased by 4,083 (2.3%). There was a monthly average of 267 personal callers to the Office.
- 7.43 Between September 2008 and March 2009 staff visited 19 post-primary schools where they registered 2,424 pupils and photographed 1,493 who applied for an electoral identity card. In addition staff from the Office visited many nursing homes in their area to promote registration and to offer the residents the opportunity to apply for an electoral identity card or an absent vote for an indefinite period.
- 7.44 At the request of Lady Sylvia Herman MP a registration clinic was run for a group of young learning disabled individuals in the North Down constituency. After assisting with the completion of registration forms, staff photographed those who wished an electoral identity card. The clinic ended with the young people being taken through the voting process at a mock polling station. The staff were invited back the following week when electoral identity cards were presented to those who had requested them.

- 7.45 Other registration initiatives undertaken included attendance at a Polish information evening in the Belfast East constituency, visits to Palace Barracks, Holywood to encourage registration by service personnel and their families and attendance at the UUP conference in December 2008 to answer questions from delegates on electoral matters. In January 2009 registration forms were sent to all residential properties at which no one was registered in those wards in the three constituencies with a significant number of vacant properties.
- 7.46 A mini canvass of the Conlig ward near Bangor was commenced in June 2008.
- 7.47 The internal walls of the Office were moved to provide additional working space.

Newtownabbey Area Electoral Office

- 7.48 The Newtownabbey Area Electoral Office is located at 1-3 Portland Avenue, Glengormley. Since September 2007 it has been responsible for the East Antrim, South Antrim and Belfast North constituencies.
- 7.49 In addition to the Area Electoral Officer there were four full time posts with additional casual staff being employed as required.
- 7.50 During the year the Office received 16,618 registration applications and completed 20,522 registration transactions. The electorate in the three constituencies served by the Office increased by 5,324 (3.1%). There was a monthly average of 241 personal callers to the Office.
- 7.51 Between September 2008 and January 2009 staff from the Office visited 32 post-primary schools across the 3 constituencies. They registered all pupils who wished to exercise their democratic rights and photographed those who wished to apply for an electoral identity card.
- 7.52 Events to promote electoral registration were held in Larne and Antrim. Contact was made with nursing homes to advise them of the change to the law on mental capacity to register and to vote. They were asked to encourage registration by their residents, particularly those who had become eligible as a consequence of this overdue change to the law.
- 7.53 In May 2008 assistance and advice was provided to the pupils and staff of Ballycraig Primary School, Larne in connection with the elections to the school council.
- 7.54 A mini canvass of the Kilwaughter ward in Larne was undertaken during the autumn.

Ballymena Area Electoral Office

- 7.55 The Ballymena Area Electoral Office is located at 122 Broughshane Street, Ballymena. It serves the North Antrim and Mid Ulster constituencies.

- 7.56** The Area Electoral Officer was supported by three permanent members of staff with additional casual staff being employed as required.
- 7.57** During the year the Office received 11,295 registration applications and completed 16,023 registration transactions. The electorate in the two constituencies served by the Office increased by 2,558 (1.9%). There was a monthly average of 184 personal callers to the Office.
- 7.58** Mini canvasses of Dunclug and Ardeevin wards in Ballymena were undertaken in June and September 2008.
- 7.59** Between September 2008 and March 2009 all post-primary schools, throughout the two constituencies, were visited as part of the Schools Initiative. As a result 2,635 students were added to the register and the majority of these were provided with electoral identity cards.
- 7.60** Registration and ID clinics were held at numerous locations and events throughout the two constituencies including Ballymena Inter-Ethnic Forum Open Day and South Derry Heritage Centre. Visits were made to nursing homes in Magherafelt and Ballycastle to assist residents in completing both registration and absent vote application forms.

**PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS AND DEVELOPMENT
OBJECTIVES 2008/09**

Targets	Status	Comments
<p>1. By 30 June 2008 to submit to the Secretary of State the report of the Chief Electoral Officer for the year ended 31 March 2008.</p> <p>By virtue of section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006, the Chief Electoral Officer must each year submit to the Secretary of State a report on how he has discharged his functions. Submission of the report by 30 June will facilitate its laying before both Houses of Parliament before the summer recess.</p>	Achieved	Submitted 20 June 2008
<p>2. By 31 August 2008 to have identified any current polling stations that may be unavailable for an election in 2009/10 or unsuitable for use by those with a disability and by 30 November to have explored the options for either mitigating action or re-location of the polling station to more suitable premises.</p> <p>The next statutory review of the Polling Station Scheme cannot take place before December 2009. In view of the likelihood of Northern Ireland wide elections before that date an exercise will be undertaken to identify any current polling stations that are unlikely to be available for elections in 2009/10 or that are unsuitable for use by those with disabilities. The findings will be carefully evaluated and the options for re-location of the polling station or mitigating action will be explored by 30 November 2008. In carrying out this work particular regard will be had to school closures that have taken place or are planned, the new Parliamentary boundaries and the needs of those with disabilities.</p>	Achieved	A press release seeking comments on the suitability of polling stations was issued on 18 April 2008. At the same time comments were invited from the political parties and other stakeholders such as Disability Action. As a result of the comments received a number of polling stations were changed, ramps were provided at others and the Restricted Access Polling Station Scheme was introduced

<p>3. On 1 December 2008 to publish a revised register of electors which contains at least 11,500 more electors and is at least as accurate as the December 2007 register.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	<p>The register published on 1 December 2008 contained 16,568 more electors. 130,000+ changes to the register made during the year.</p>
<p>Section 13(1)(b) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 requires the publication of a revised register of electors on 1 December each year. Achievement of the target will result in a register which is approximately 86% comprehensive. In addition to the increase in the numbers registered approximately 150,000 changes to the existing register will be required to secure its current high level of accuracy.</p>		
<p>4. By 31 March 2009 to have identified qualified individuals to staff polling stations and count centres for any elections to be held in the year commencing 1 April 2009.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	<p>Pools of staff refreshed and arrangements for testing and training in place.</p>
<p>Elections to the European Parliament are due to take place in June 2009 and the possibility of a general election early in 2009/10 cannot be excluded. To avoid undue pressure during the run up period, staff will be identified following testing where appropriate, by 31 March.</p>		

Registration Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>1. By 1 November 2008 to be ready in all respects to process applications for anonymous registration.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Office is currently consulting on the details of anonymous registration in Northern Ireland with a view to its introduction by 1 November. Before that appropriate internal procedures will have to be developed and staff trained in them. Potential users of anonymous registration, such as the victims of domestic violence and sexual crime, will have to be advised of this change to the law which will allow them to exercise their democratic rights, and to enjoy the other benefits of electoral registration, without the risk of being traced from their entry on the electoral register.</p>	Not Proceeding	Work on this objective was suspended when it became clear that the required amendments to electoral law would not be made during this year.
<p>2. By 31 March 2009 to have conducted registration events at 95% of secondary schools.</p> <p>The register published on 1 December 2007 showed a marked decrease in registration levels amongst young people. Under new powers that should be in place by 1 August the Chief Electoral Officer will be able to require the principal of any secondary school to provide him with basic information on pupils of registration age. Electoral Office staff will then visit schools by arrangement and assist the pupils to complete registration forms. In this way, and through other initiatives with young people, a significant increase in registration levels amongst this group will be achieved.</p>	Achieved	Visits were made to 95% of secondary schools and more than 13,000 pupils were registered.

Registration Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>3. By 31 August 2008 to have informed those enfranchised by the changes to the law on mental capacity of their entitlement and, where possible, to secure their registration.</p> <p>The present very unsatisfactory law on mental incapacity to register and to vote should, at last, cease to have effect this summer. Action will be taken to ensure, so far as practicable, that those affected by the change are aware of it and that they secure their right to play a full part in the democratic process by registering as electors.</p>	Achieved	Press release issued 30 June 2008. Booklet giving details of adjustments made to electoral law for those with a disability published and distributed widely. Visits to many residential homes and special schools.
<p>4. By 31 March 2009 to trial a ‘mini canvass’ in at least four areas with low registration levels and four with significant new developments.</p> <p>The continuous registration process that has replaced the annual canvass is unique to Northern Ireland. A number of further initiatives to promote registration during the year will take place. One of these will be in the form of a ‘mini canvass’ for four areas with low levels of registration and four areas where there have been significant new residential developments. The results of this initiative will be evaluated and compared with others to inform decisions on the work to be undertaken in 2009/10.</p>	Achieved	Mini-canvasses conducted in 9 wards or part wards between June and December 2008. More than 4,000 changes made to the register.
<p>5. By 31 March 2009 to contact EU citizens resident in Northern Ireland and encourage electoral registration ahead of the European Parliamentary elections.</p> <p>Building on the work done in 2007/08 at polling stations in Northern Ireland for the Polish and Romanian elections, contact will be made, through community groups and otherwise, with EU citizens in Northern Ireland to encourage them to register as electors before the European Parliamentary elections in June 2009.</p>	Achieved	Letters sent to all EU citizens registered in Northern Ireland reminding them of the need to complete a form if they wished to vote here at European Parliamentary elections. Assistance to, and presence at, the Lithuanian elections held in Northern Ireland.

Registration Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>6. By 31 March 2009 to have referred as least 50 cases of alleged wilful failure to provide information required for registration purposes to the PSNI for investigation with a view to prosecution.</p> <p>Providing information to the Chief Electoral Officer to enable him to carry out his registration duties is not optional: it is a legal obligation. Failure to provide such information is an offence punishable by a fine of up to £1000. Whilst the Electoral Office will continue to do all that is reasonably practicable to assist those entitled to register to do so, firm action will be taken against those who wilfully refuse to comply with the law.</p>	<p>Not Achieved</p>	<p>Only 4 cases were referred to PSNI. This was in large part due to the fact that the new robust procedures secured a higher level of compliance to requests to provide information required for registration. Another reason for not meeting the target was the difficulty experienced in securing personal service of the documentation.</p>
Election Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>7. By 30 June 2008, for all matters except elections and by 1 January 2009 in respect of elections, to train staff in and be ready in all respects to implement changes to practice and procedure made as a result of the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2008, the Electoral Administration Act 2006 (Commencement No6) Order 2008 and the Service Voters' Registration Period (Northern Ireland) Order 2008.</p> <p>Significant changes to electoral law are likely to be in force by 1 July. Staff will be trained in the consequential changes to practice and procedure. This will be done by 1 January 2009 for the changes relating to elections and by 1 July 2008 for all other matters.</p>	<p>Achieved</p>	<p>All staff were trained centrally on these important issues.</p>

Election Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>8. By 30 June 2008 to have identified the election documents to be made available in other formats and to have put in place arrangements for their production.</p> <p>Under new legislation, likely to be in force by 1 July, the Chief Electoral Officer will have to decide which election documents he should make available in other formats. Although no Northern Ireland wide election is likely to occur during 2008/09 the new provision would apply to any by election which could occur at any time. It is therefore necessary to be ready to give effect to the new provision as soon as it is in force.</p>	Achieved	Documents identified and arrangements for translation and procurement put in place.
<p>9. By 31 August 2008 to have explored the practicality of PASS accreditation of the Electoral Identity Card and, if it is decided to proceed, to have commenced the issue of accredited cards.</p> <p>Cards bearing the Proof Age Standards Scheme (PASS) logo are widely recognised throughout the UK as proof of the bearer's name and age. To increase the functionality of the electoral ID card, and so make it more attractive particularly to young people, the option of having it PASS accredited will be taken forward.</p>	Achieved	It was decided not to proceed with PASS accreditation which would have required a weakening of some of the anti-fraud measures currently in place for Electoral Identity Card applications.
<p>10. By 30 November 2008 to evaluate options for the provision of electoral identity cards having regard in particular to the security of the personal data used in the production process, the security of the cards, the time within which they can be produced and cost.</p> <p>The current arrangements for the production of electoral identity cards have been in place for more than five years and it is now appropriate to review them to see if an even better service can be provided.</p>	Achieved	Board agreed at November 08 meeting to bring production in-house wef 1 April 09.

Election Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>11. By 31 January 2009 to have evaluated options for the provision of additional lighting for at least one compartment at each polling station.</p> <p>The feasibility of providing safe additional lighting in at least 1 compartment at each polling station to assist those with visual impairment will be explored in time for any solution to be implemented at elections in 2009/10.</p>	Achieved	One acceptable tender received but procurement could not proceed as funding was not settled.
<p>12. By 31 March 2009 to have completed a review of all forms used in connection with Westminster and European Parliamentary elections.</p> <p>The forms for use at these elections will be revised, simplified and reduced in number. Where possible a standard form for use at all types of election will be adopted.</p>	Achieved	All forms were reviewed and many simplified. Standard templates will be used at all future elections.
<p>13. By 31 March 2009 to have reviewed the procedures for entry to election counts.</p> <p>The law imposes tight controls on who may be present at an election count. The current procedures for securing compliance will be reviewed and where necessary amended.</p>	Achieved	Procedures reviewed and new directions issued on 1 April 2009.
<p>14. By 31 March 2009 to have in place revised procedures for the checking of absent vote applications and declarations of identity.</p> <p>Changes to the law on absent voting are expected to be in force by 1 July. The associated procedures will be revised with dual aims of making it easier for those entitled to an absent vote to exercise that right and more difficult for those not entitled to such a vote to obtain one.</p>	Achieved	All staff briefed on new procedures on 23 March 2009.

Election Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>15. By 31 March 2009 to be ready in all respects to implement the new Parliamentary constituency boundaries and any changes to be made to the Polling Station Scheme.</p> <p>The new Parliamentary boundaries will take effect only when the writ is moved for the next Westminster general election. Any consequential changes to the Polling Station Scheme will take effect at the same time. Before these changes can be implemented considerable work to amend the relevant records has to be undertaken.</p>	Achieved	All preparatory work undertaken but not implemented as no General Election called.
Corporate Services Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>16. By 31 May 2008 to develop a process which will ensure that throughout the year there are in place properly let contracts for the provision of all routine goods and services.</p> <p>To avoid the risk of having to delay operational action due to the procurement process, a process will be developed to ensure that a new contract is in place as soon as the existing one expires in respect of the provision of all routine goods and services.</p>	Not Achieved	A robust process was implemented in November. The slippage, which was due to other higher priority work, had no adverse impact on the business.
<p>17. By 30 June 2008 to have submitted to the Equality Commission a report on the five year review of the Electoral Office Equality Scheme.</p> <p>The Electoral Office Equality Scheme was approved in 2003. It will be reviewed in light of experience gained over the last five years and of the need for a good relations strategy to inform the pro-active promotion of good relations between those in all the section 75 categories.</p>	Achieved	Report submitted 22 April 2008.
<p>18. By 30 June 2008 to fully implement the planned upgrade of the EONI IT network.</p> <p>The eight Electoral Office premises are linked by an IT network which requires upgrading to meet the current and likely future needs of the Office. The work, started in 2007/08, will be completed by 30 June.</p>	Not Achieved	Work was completed by 15 August 2008

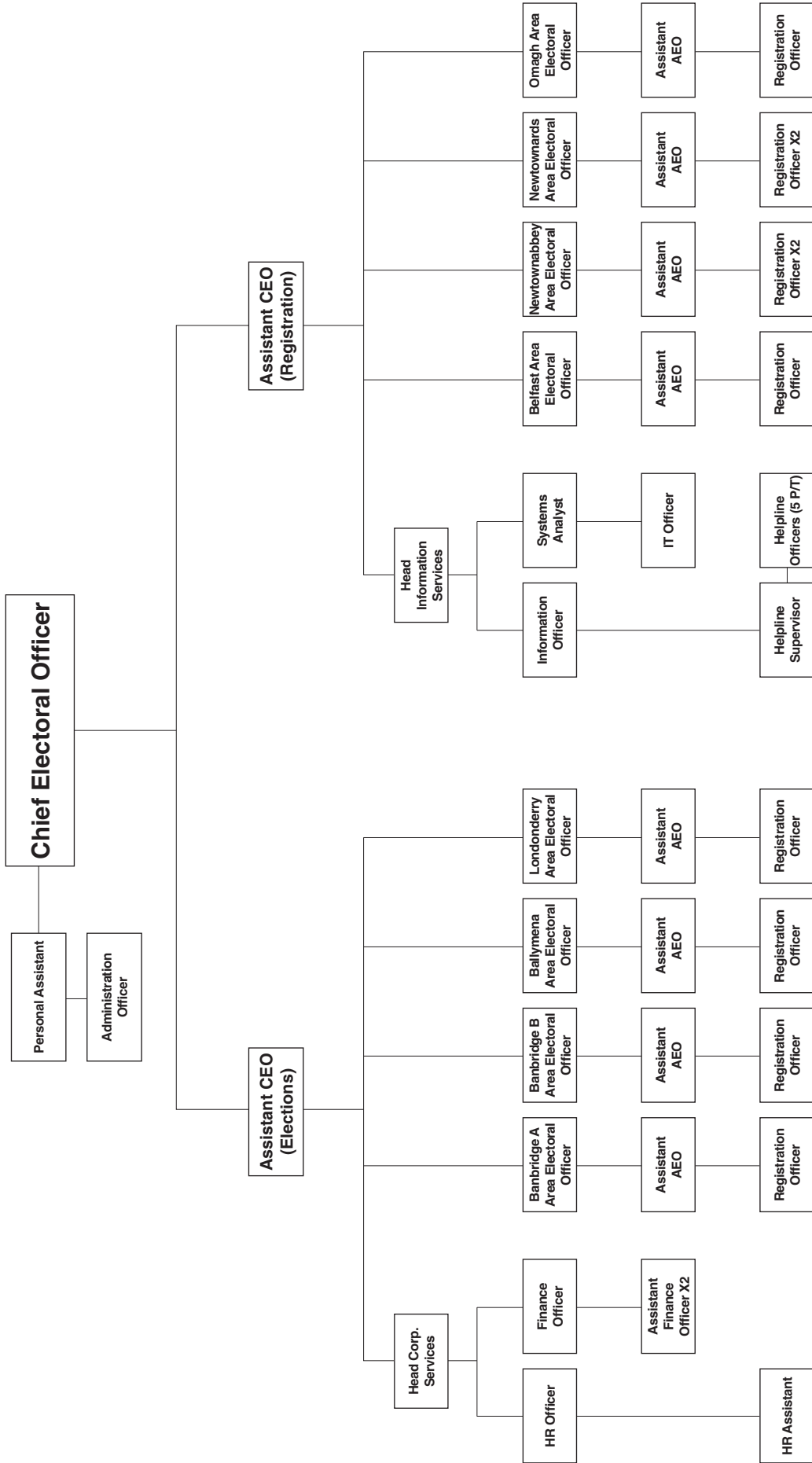
Corporate Services Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>19. By 30 September 2008, following the development of procedures and the delivery of training, to devolve appropriate budgets to Area Offices.</p> <p>Following job evaluations carried out in 2007/08 a number of Electoral Office posts were upgraded and it has been decided to devolve budgets to them, where appropriate, to free up senior management time. The first phase of delegation will take place on 1 April and the second phase, delegation to each Area Office, will be completed by 1 October.</p>	Achieved	Procedures developed and staff trained by due date.
<p>20. By 30 September 2008 to have commenced delivery of the AEA Certificate in Electoral Administration to at least 20% of qualified EONI staff.</p> <p>The Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) has for some years been the examining body for the professional qualifications for electoral administrators in Great Britain. Because of the significant differences in electoral law between Great Britain and Northern Ireland these examinations have not, in practice, been open to Electoral Office staff. It has been agreed with the AEA that Northern Ireland versions of the qualifications will be made available. By the year end the Foundation Course, the lowest qualification, will have been delivered to at least 25% of Electoral Office permanent staff.</p>	Achieved	The training of 5 EONI staff (100% of those qualified) commenced on time and was continuing at the year end.
<p>21. By 31 March 2009 to have delivered the AEA Foundation Course in electoral administration to at least 25% of EONI permanent staff.</p> <p>The Certificate of Electoral Administration is the second level AEA qualification and is open only to individuals who have achieved the first level qualification. The Certificate training course will commence by 1 October 2008 leading to an examination in 2009/10.</p>	Achieved	The Foundation Course was delivered to 30 (60%) members of the permanent staff. In addition 2 representatives of the Electoral Commission were trained.

Corporate Services Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>22. By 31 March 2009 to have in place a revised Equal Opportunities Policy in which all staff have been trained.</p> <p>The current Electoral Office Equal Opportunities Policy was adopted in 1994 and requires updating. All staff will receive training in the revised policy by 31 March 2009.</p>	Achieved	All staff receive training on the revised policy
<p>23. By 31 March 2009 to have implemented all agreed actions arising from the 2008 staff survey.</p> <p>Each year an anonymous survey of Electoral Office staff is conducted. An action plan to address the issues that arose from the survey conducted in January 2008 was agreed by the Management Board at its March meeting. All agreed actions will be completed by 31 March 2009.</p>	Achieved	All actions implemented by February 2009.
Corporate Governance Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>24. By 31 May 2008 to have in place a process to monitor and evaluate all initiatives and significant changes of practice and procedure and, where appropriate, to amend these.</p> <p>It is vital that all initiatives are properly evaluated so that in future resources can be directed to what is known to work. Building on existing practice a uniform evaluation process will be developed and implemented by 31 May.</p>	Achieved	New procedures introduced in May. Review of initiatives is a standing agenda item at Board meetings.
<p>25. By 31 May 2008 to provide an improved call logging system that will provide required management information.</p> <p>Following on the very significant increase in the number of calls to the Electoral Office Helpline an improved call logging system, which will provide improved management information on the nature of calls and the response to them, will be developed and implemented.</p>	Achieved	New system implemented 30 May 2008. Out puts considered at all Board meetings.

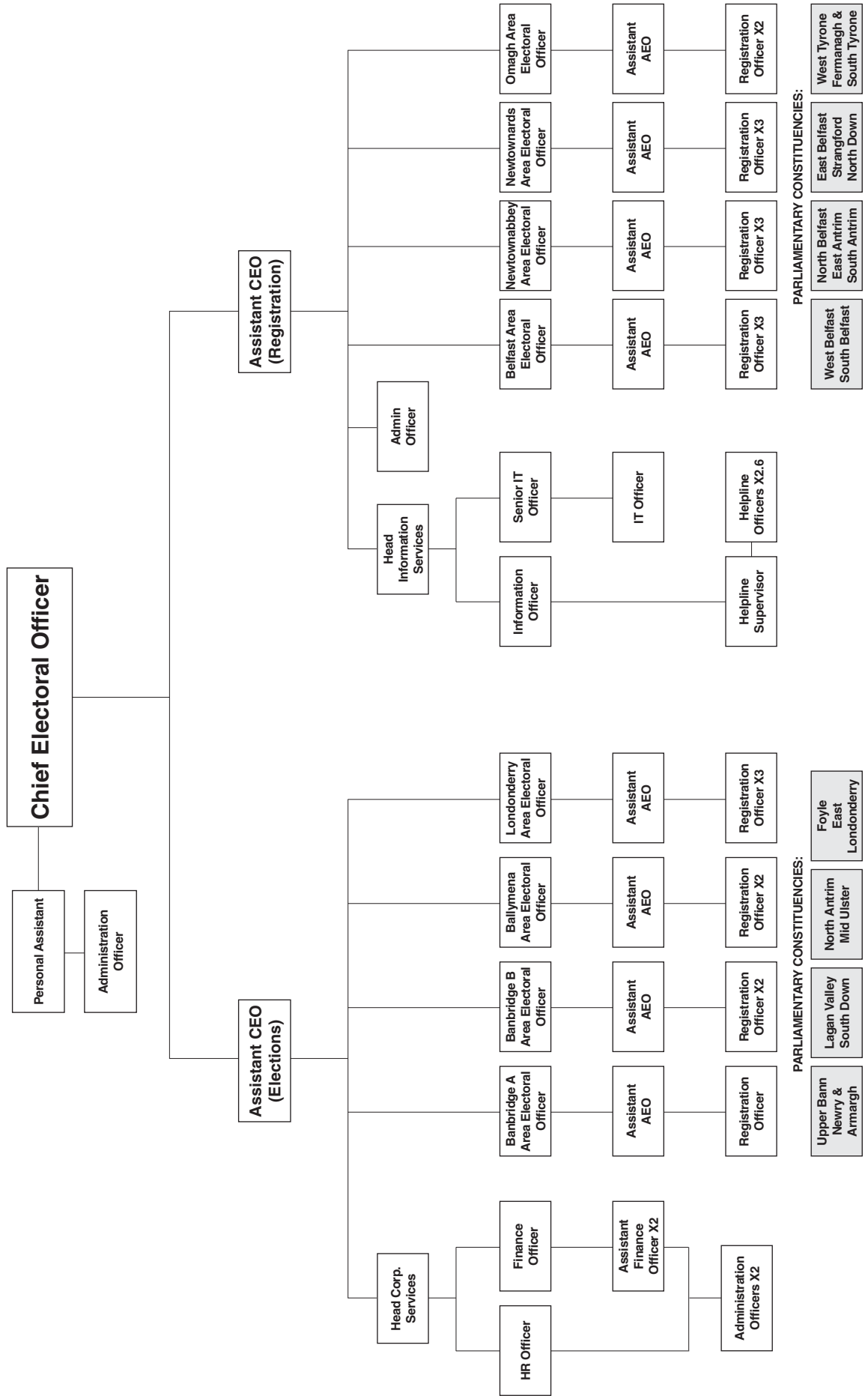
Corporate Governance Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p>26. By 30 June 2008 to design and implement an access database to provide Helpline staff with more comprehensive information for use when responding to calls about Electoral Identity Card applications and to provide management information on card applications and processing.</p> <p>Although the production of Electoral Identity Cards is undertaken by a private sector contractor numerous enquiries about perceived delays in delivery are received by the Electoral Office Helpline. Changes will be made to assist Helpline staff in dealing with such calls and so to improve the service to the public.</p>	Achieved	The new database was implemented by the due date and significantly improved the service available to callers.
<p>27. By 30 June 2008 to have agreed with the NIO a revised Management Statement and Financial Memorandum.</p> <p>Although the Chief Electoral Officer is an independent statutory office holder he is funded by the Northern Ireland Office. The Management Statement and Financial Memorandum, which deal largely with the general way in which the funding may be used and the controls in place, is due for revision by 30 June.</p>	Achieved	Revised Statement and Memorandum signed 30 June 2008.
<p>28. By 30 June 2008 to publish a booklet setting out the reasonable adjustments to electoral law and practice to enable those with disabilities to play their full part in the democratic process.</p> <p>So that they can exercise their right to play a full part in the democratic process electoral law and practice include a number of reasonable adjustments for those with disabilities. A booklet giving details of all these adjustments will be published and made available to relevant stakeholders and the public by 30 June.</p>	Achieved	The booklet was published on 30 June 2008 and can be downloaded from www.eoni.org.uk .

Corporate Governance Development Objectives	Status	Comments
<p data-bbox="194 331 778 533">29. By 31 October 2008 to have carried out a review of the TRIM records management system and of the Records Management Policy and to have implemented the agreed recommendations.</p> <p data-bbox="245 551 778 786">The TRIM electronic records management system was successfully introduced during 2007/08 and has radically affected work within the Electoral Office. A review of that system and the associated Records Management Policy will be completed by 31 October.</p>	Achieved	Review completed and minor recommended changes implemented.
<p data-bbox="194 801 778 969">30. By 31 March 2009 to have formalised the respective responsibilities of the returning officer and the deputy returning officers at district council elections.</p> <p data-bbox="245 987 778 1335">By law the Chief Electoral Officer is the returning officer for all district council elections and has responsibility for their proper conduct. By custom and practice council Chief Executives act as the deputy returning officer at these elections and carry out many of the tasks. The respective responsibilities of the returning officer and the deputy returning officers will be formalised by 31 March 2009.</p>	Achieved	Letters sent on 31 March 2009 formally setting out the respective responsibilities of the CEO and DROs.
<p data-bbox="194 1350 778 1518">31. By 31 March 2009 to review the operation of the Electoral Office corporate social responsibility strategy, to amend it as necessary, and to have in place an action plan for 2009/10.</p> <p data-bbox="245 1536 778 1774">An Electoral Office Corporate Social Responsibility Policy will be agreed by 1 June 2008. By 31 March 2009 its workings will be reviewed and any necessary adjustments made. A plan setting out the actions to take place in 2009/10 will have been approved.</p>	Achieved	A revised Policy and Action Plan were approved by Board on 19 February 2009.

ELECTORAL OFFICE STRUCTURE AS AT 1 APRIL 2008



ELECTORAL OFFICE STRUCTURE AS AT 31 MARCH 2009



ANNEX D

OPERATING COSTS

	£k
<u>Basic Pay</u>	
Permanent Staff	961.0
Temporary Staff	126.3
Basic Pay Total	1,087.3
<u>Overtime</u>	
Permanent Staff	7.7
Overtime Total	7.7
<u>Employers National Insurance</u>	
Permanent Staff	63.6
Temporary Staff	5.7
Employers National Insurance Total	69.3
Accrued Superannuation Liability Charge	159.3
Total Staff	1,323.6
Power	46.1
Premises (Keyholding)	2.3
Maintenance & Minor Works	67.3
Training	41.0
Travel	25.4
Subsistence	3.1
Personnel Costs	7.1
Other Employee Costs	3.6
Hospitality	0.8
Office Services (Printing, Equipment Hire, Window Cleaning)	125.4
Computers (Software, Hardware, Maintenance, Line Rental etc)	257.7
Professional Services	105.6
Materials (Mainly Stationery Orders)	29.3
Property charges	110.8
Postage	135.0
Telecommunications	26.0
Office Equipment	9.3
Central & Common Services (Cleaning Offices)	14.5
Estate Management	12.3

Insurance (Premises)	5.3
Advertising	13.0
Fees	3.8
Transport Costs	6.3
Advisory Services	24.7
Operating Leases (Rent of Offices & Photocopiers)	241.6
Total Goods & Services	1,317.3
Electoral Identity Card	101.6
Encouraging Registration (Prize Draw)	6.0
Non Cash Costs	134.2
Receipts	(109.5)
TOTAL PROGRAMME	132.3
Capital	548.1
GRAND TOTAL	3,321.3



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