

Annex A

Maximising registration: phase two

An announcement by the Minister for Cities and the Constitution on 5 February 2014 explained that all EROs in Great Britain were to receive funding in 2014 for maximising registration. EROs were considered best placed to determine what activities would be most effective in their areas and the time at which they would be best scheduled. This maximising registration activity is ongoing. The Cabinet Office's discussions with a selection of LAs and VJBs has identified a number of innovative and engaging initiatives which offer additional examples of good practice which other EROs may wish to replicate in the future.

10.1. Tablet assisted canvassing, Barrow in Furness

Following the completion of the annual canvass 2013/14, Barrow-in-Furness electoral services team used money provided through the second phase of maximising registration activity to conduct a pilot exercise testing tablet-assisted canvassing. The electoral services team worked closely with the council's GIS officer and Management Software (EMS Democracy Counts) provider to design and develop an app which would allow data to be collected on a rolling registration form presented through a tablet. The team believes a strong working relationship with their GIS officer and the EMS Provider (Democracy Counts) was critical to the successful delivery of the activity reinforcing the benefit of departments across the council and EMS Providers working in partnership.

The pilot focused on two of the hardest to canvass and most deprived wards in Barrow town centre – Hindpool and Central – which have a high proportion of private rental and social housing. As previous canvass records have shown, residents in these areas are often unwilling to engage with registration processes. Tablet technology was consequently intended to engage those who may be reluctant or unable to complete paper forms or have difficulty understanding and completing any kind of official paperwork. No data was stored on the tablet with online collection allowing the information collected to go straight from the tablet and into the EMS system. Data was therefore secure with no paper copies held by the canvasser. With the right changes, under IER this process could be connected directly to the Government Digital Service to support the process of verification.

Canvassing followed typical procedures with three canvassers being employed to call twice on properties identified as non-responding during the annual canvass. Where there was no response, two personally addressed rolling registration forms were hand delivered by the canvassers. The activity itself led to 794 properties being visited with 101 new electors being found from 81 properties. This marked a ten per cent (household) success rate. A further 40 rolling registration forms were received from two forms being delivered to each of the 652 non-responding properties. The activity therefore appears to have had a notable effect on registration rates in an area which had already been canvassed over the winter 2013/14 through traditional methods.

One of the major advantages highlighted by the activity in Barrow-in-Furness was the potential cost savings associated with reduced printing and postage. By hand delivering rolling registration forms during the canvass as opposed to running postage and doorstep canvassing separately, a saving of approximately £260.80 was made across the two wards¹. A further saving of £126.25 was estimated through registering new electors via the tablet as opposed to printed forms². MOSAIC analysis and local knowledge had suggested access to the internet was more limited in these areas and would present a potential barrier to registration under IER. Electronic canvassing could therefore present a more cost-effective way of targeting these individuals who would otherwise require paper forms.

A benefit of the technology has been the ability to record an audit trail of when properties have been visited by canvassers. This can not only help EROs demonstrate how they are meeting the Electoral Commission's performance standards but could minimise the variable quality of canvassers highlighted by some intensive canvassing LAs. Analysis of this data will also permit further assessments of the days and times when canvassing is most likely to result in a positive response allowing for more coordinated and targeted efforts in the future.

10.2. Rock Enrol!, Redcar and Cleveland

The second phase of maximising registration saw funding distributed to LAs/VJBs according to levels of under registration. Allocations were based on the number of non-registered people, predominantly comparing the size of the register to the 16+ population. A smaller element was based on the number of 16-18 year olds. LAs/VJBs were therefore encouraged to use some of the maximising registration funding allocation to support delivery of the freely available Rock Enrol! (RE!) learning resource in their areas via schools and youth groups.

¹ Rolling registration forms delivered to 652 non-responding properties at approximately £0.40 per posting.

² New elector form estimated to cost £1.25.

Redcar and Cleveland electoral services team worked with their youth service to plan and deliver RE! in their area. To date activity has already taken place in one local school, the session run by a member of the council's youth service, with the intention being to roll it out to every school in their area. They reported that *'the lesson was delivered, worked well and it resulted in voter registration forms being completed'*. In agreement with 'Safe in Tees Valley' the youth service will now be delivering RE! to their National Citizenship Service programme with six 15-person sessions already scheduled for July and August 2014. If necessary they will be able to meet additional demand.

Further sessions will be delivered in September for new cohorts of attainers and final year students during induction weeks. This will be particularly significant for those seventeen year olds who may turn eighteen prior to the 2015 parliamentary election. It is their intention to embed RE! into each school's annual programme of activities which will have the potential for longer-term impact beyond the current and next academic years.

10.3. 'Professional canvassers', Kirklees

Given the challenge of registering URGs versus other potential electors, appointing suitable and qualified individuals for the intensive canvassing positions could be significantly more difficult. Kirklees Metropolitan Borough is using money allocated during phase two of maximising registration to use the experiences of a twelve-week pilot started in the autumn of 2013³. This has involved employing members of the council's revenue and benefits team to carry out canvass and publicity activity throughout the borough. These people were knowledgeable on working with many URGs, for example social renters, and also experienced in visiting properties in areas where under-registration was likely to be high. In a presentation given to the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) in March 2014 Kirklees Council were positive about the impact of the initiative⁴ and saw this as a good way of reaching these hard to reach (and hard to register) individuals.

10.4. Partnership opportunities, Dumfries and Galloway

Dumfries and Galloway ERO team has developed a programme of activity which is wide ranging both in terms of reach and the methods designed to encourage new registrations. This has been supported through the involvement of a number of partners. It therefore demonstrates the opportunities presented by partnership working to think creatively about the best ways to target different URGs in a variety of settings and through audience-specific channels. This includes:

³ 'Maximising registration – Kirklees', Susan Hutson, presentation given to Association of Electoral Administrators, Blackpool, Monday 3 March 2014, http://www.aea-elections.co.uk/annualseminars/2014_events.jsp

⁴ *ibid*

- Coordinating with their education department and local schools to deliver a school awareness programme using Rock Enrol! materials and lesson plans. They are also working alongside local youth practitioners to explore possibilities for adapting the materials for use outside of schools, for example with youth groups.
- Working with local colleges to set up information pods offering students the chance to register instantly.
- Cooperating with their council tax department to insert registration forms into 70,000 annual council tax bills.
- Distributing information packs through schools, libraries, and community centres.
- Attending agricultural shows across the region to target rural communities and supporting youth roadshows and festivals to encourage registration among attainers and young people.
- Working with the NHS, police and registered social landlords to include articles in newsletters on the benefits of electoral registration.

The activities demonstrate how it is possible through partnerships to carry out a wide range of activities within a single LA or VJB area aimed at multiple URGs. In addition the above activities have been designed to run alongside a targeted mail out, door-to-door canvassing for social housing and private rentals, paid for advertising on bus information boards and internal bus posters, and a social media and local radio publicity campaign. All of these have been supported by the second phase of the Cabinet Office's maximising registration funding which has topped up existing activity.

These activities are ongoing with the intention of making the register as complete as possible ahead of the introduction of IER in Scotland in September 2014.