

## Key stages in the election process

The local authority will need to contribute towards the police operational plan by sharing information as outlined and providing input into the polling stations where problems may occur. Polling stations can be assessed on the basis of a Red, Amber, or Green category to indicate those stations that are of high to low risk. This approach will help in making decisions about the level of police presence that may be required on election day.

Additionally, to assist in building the police operational plan, the electoral services manager (ESM) can provide the force election SPOC with information in respect of key stages in the electoral timetable that may trigger certain types of malpractice activity.

<b>Key stages</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Information from ESM/Potential action by SPOC</b>
Overview	Provision of electoral information and specific case history (based on past events) across the district	Type of potential malpractice and localities where doubtful activity can be expected  Information to augment police intelligence and help make decisions on the level of response
Notice of election	The formal commencement date of the election timetable	
Close of nominations	Deadline date for those standing for election to submit legal documentation, declaring themselves as candidates  Candidates may have criminal convictions that prevent them from standing	Candidate name and address data available soon after deadline  Comparison with police records may be made to identify history of any candidates that may affect their eligibility to stand and the democratic process  The SPOC should inform the ESM of any concerns that may have an impact on the democratic process

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		<p>(providing this complies with the Data Protection Act 1998)</p> <p>Nomination forms contain the signatures of people who sign in support of a candidate. The nomination paper may contain the forged signatures of electors. The SPOC will need to conduct enquiries where allegations in respect of this are made.</p>
Publication of election agents	<p>A candidate at any election (apart from parish or community council elections) must by law appoint an election agent</p> <p>The election agent is the person responsible for the legal conduct of the candidate's campaign</p>	<p>Election agent name and address data available soon after deadline:</p> <p>Comparison with police records may be made to identify history of any election agent that may have an impact on the democratic process</p> <p>The SPOC should inform the ESM of any concerns that may have an impact on the democratic process (without breaching the law)</p>
Deadline date for registration	<p>Latest time to apply to be included on the electoral register. This particular deadline is 12 days before the election and, therefore, limited time is available within which to carry out checks where doubts are raised.</p> <p>The ESM is bound into a statutory timeframe for processing registration applications, so that all people entitled to be registered by the deadline are included on the electoral register for voting</p> <p>Aim of crime to fraudulently register false ('ghost') voters:</p>	<p>The ESM will alert the SPOC to high levels of applications received, or patterns of concern, on the approach to, or on, the deadline day that indicate potential malpractice</p> <p>The ESM will alert the SPOC to high levels of applications being delivered <b>by an individual</b> that may indicate potential malpractice. Care – it may be that such applications are in fact bona fide, but scrutiny by the ESM will identify doubts</p> <p>A prompt response will be required by the SPOC in respect of meeting with the ESM to review bulk</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to gain votes to win an election (particularly where marginal seats apply and there are only a few votes between the winning and losing candidate), or</li> <li>to commit other types of fraud (financial, identity)</li> </ul>	<p>registration applications received, where the ESM indicates doubt as to the authenticity</p> <p>Where false registrations are suspected, the SPOC will need to commence enquiries and consider evidence gathering needs</p>
Deadline dates for postal or proxy vote applications	<p>Latest dates by which someone on the electoral register can apply to vote by post, or to legally (and in writing) apply to nominate someone to vote on their behalf (proxy voting)</p> <p>The deadline for applying to vote by post is 11 days before the election with the deadline for applying to vote by proxy being only 6 days before the election. There is limited time available within which to carry out checks where doubts are raised.</p> <p>The ESM is bound into a statutory timeframe for processing postal and proxy applications, so that all people entitled to receive a postal or a proxy vote by the deadline have been included</p> <p>Aim of crime to fraudulently gain votes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>obtaining and completing postal vote packs intended for bona fide voters and without their knowledge</li> <li>redirecting and completing postal vote packs to alternative addresses without the knowledge of the bona fide voter</li> </ul>	<p>The ESM will alert the SPOC to high levels of applications received on the approach to, or on, the deadline day that indicate potential malpractice</p> <p>The ESM will alert the SPOC to high levels of applications being delivered <b>by an individual</b> that may indicate potential malpractice. Be aware that such applications could be bona fide, but scrutiny by the ESM will identify doubts.</p> <p>A prompt response will be required by the SPOC to meet the ESM and review bulk registration applications received, where the ESM indicates doubt about the authenticity</p> <p>Where false postal vote applications are suspected, the SPOC will need to commence enquiries, consider evidence gathering needs and decide upon any appropriate action that might be necessary, bearing in mind the restrictive timescales that remain ahead of the election</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>applying to vote by proxy without the knowledge or consent of the voter</li> </ul>	
Dispatch of postal votes	<p>Postal vote packs are usually issued approximately 4 days (including the weekend) after the deadline date for receipt of applications, although they may be released earlier if it has been possible to produce them</p> <p>The production of postal vote packs will be subject to the print company schedule and their capability/capacity to produce them. Large numbers may affect the production and exact date for dispatch</p> <p>Aim of crime to fraudulently gain votes by intimidating:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>voters to vote a particular way by making visits to households soon after postal ballot packs are delivered</li> <li>Royal Mail Group Ltd workers to hand over blank postal vote packs instead of delivering them to voters</li> <li>voters into handing over uncompleted postal vote packs</li> <li>voters into handing over completed postal vote packs for the purposes of opening and altering them, or instructing voters to apply for a replacement pack and vote in a particular way</li> </ul>	<p>Early and close liaison with the local Royal Mail sorting office is vital. (See Electoral Commission guidance <a href="#">Postal voting – A quick guide for Royal Mail drivers and delivery staff (PDF)</a>).</p> <p>This is a key date for police activity in areas of concern and a date that the ESM should make known to the SPOC.</p> <p>Delivery of postal vote packs by Royal Mail workers will commence the day after dispatch.</p> <p>Potential malpractice may occur by the targeting of Royal Mail workers to hand over postal vote packs rather than delivering to the voter</p> <p>Intimidation of voters to hand over uncompleted or completed postal vote packs to those who wish to perpetrate electoral fraud may occur</p> <p>Large numbers of lost or spoilt postal vote packs in a particular area may indicate fraud. Voters may be intimidated into handing over completed postal vote packs and instructed to vote a particular way on replacement pack.</p> <p>During the week before the election, post boxes may also be targeted in order to illegally retrieve postal vote packs returned by voters</p>

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		<p>The ESM may receive allegations from voters and/or candidates and agents in respect of the activities outlined above and these should be referred immediately to the SPOC</p> <p>There may be instances where allegations are received that one person in the household has completed postal vote packs for all members of a household. It may be necessary for the NPTs or SPOC to visit areas where multiple postal vote packs are delivered to reinforce the message that they should be completed by each individual and returned direct to the returning officer's office</p> <p>Where malpractice is suspected, the SPOC will need to commence enquiries, consider evidence gathering needs and consider visiting candidates and party workers in respect of allegations made and their duty to follow the Electoral Commission's Code of Conduct for candidates and party workers</p>
Appointment of polling agents	<p>People appointed by the candidate to scrutinise the proceedings on election day</p> <p>Polling agents are appointed to attend specific polling stations and to detect personation. They are entitled to be located within the room within which the voting will take place, although they are not entitled to interfere with the process. Having marked off on their copy of the register those voters who have applied for a ballot paper, they must leave their copy of the register in the polling</p>	<p>Polling agents' name and address data available soon after deadline</p> <p>Comparison to police records may be made to identify history of any individuals appointed that may impact upon the democratic process</p> <p>The SPOC should inform the ESM of any concerns that may have an impact upon the democratic process (without breaching the law)</p>

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	<p>station. They can only remove their marked copy of the register after the close of poll.</p>	<p>Care must be taken that any polling agents are not intimidating voters or instructing voters how to vote. Disruption within the polling station could occur if this behaviour is not prevented and the process could be open to legal challenge. It is important that the SPOC is clear about positive intervention if police support is requested.</p>
<p>Day of election</p>	<p>There may be a variety of incidents that could cause disruption to the day of the poll and would require SPOC attention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public disorder</li> <li>• intimidation of voters</li> <li>• allegations from candidates, agents, or voters</li> <li>• personation.</li> </ul> <p>Police should be aware of any rising tension or incidents that may increase the likelihood of public disorder. They should respond using recognised policing tactics.</p> <p>Aim of crime to fraudulently gain votes by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intimidation of voters whereby on the approach to the entrance of the polling station, or at some other time before the election, voters are instructed to vote a particular way</li> </ul> <p>Voters may wrongly fear that those outside the polling station have influence and will have access to information that indicates how an individual has voted</p>	<p>Personation – polling station staff will be alerted to this when the bona fide elector calls to vote but records indicate that a vote has already been cast, or where doubts are raised by suspicious behaviour</p> <p>Polling agents appointed by candidates at the polling station may deter attempts of personation by people known to the polling agent</p> <p>Electoral Commission advice for presiding officers on personation will guide polling station staff on what to do should personation be suspected</p> <p>The presiding officer may consider calling the police and asking those involved to await the arrival of a police officer</p> <p>It is important that polling staff record as much information as possible about such an incident (the ESM will have provided polling staff with the guidance and necessary paperwork on which to do this) as this will assist in any subsequent investigation</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="539 240 1245 416">• Allegations from all stakeholders must be formally recorded and assessed so that a proportionate response, if any, is made, taking prior agreements between the police and the local authority into account</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="584 459 1245 863">While there may be allegations of electoral malpractice that later are upheld, there may also be instances where attempts are made to cause disruption by making unfounded allegations. It is important that all the available information and any response, which may be later scrutinised, has been appropriately and fully considered. For instance, third-party, unsubstantiated allegations will be recorded, but may not be investigated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="539 906 1245 1015">• Personation is an attempt by an individual to falsely cast a vote in the name of a voter without legal authorisation to do so</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="584 1054 1245 1270">Polling agents may be present in the polling station when attempts at personation occur and they can require the presiding officer (appointed person in charge of the polling station) to put statutory questions to any voter suspected of committing this offence</p> <p data-bbox="584 1310 1245 1382">The presiding officer must, by law, issue a person with a ballot paper if that person</p>	<p data-bbox="1276 240 2007 456">Local police commanders should ensure that their tactical plan involves the ability to respond swiftly to deal with an ongoing incident, if possible (eg, where the individuals concerned are still present, or to gather information from polling staff) and at the earliest opportunity</p> <p data-bbox="1276 496 2007 711">If voters are discouraged from entering, or are intimidated when they enter, a polling station, the police may need to consider dispersing those involved from the vicinity. An objective assessment of the circumstances is needed prior to taking appropriate action.</p>

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	verbally confirms his or her identity. There is no exemption to this rule, even where the person is suspected of personation	