

ASSOCIATION OF ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATORS



2 February 2016

The Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) is unable to comment on the Labour Party statement recently reported in the media that 800,000 people have fallen off the electoral register, with university areas showing particularly high drop off rates.

Over the last couple of months the Electoral Commission have been analysing data supplied by Electoral Registration Officers across the country following the publication of the revised register of electors on 1 December. Once their report is published later this month this will give a clearer indication in relation to the state of the registers.

However, unlike the register of electors annual canvass prior to Individual Electoral Registration (IER) when there was just one household form to complete, under IER there is now a two stage process during the autumn annual canvass. The first stage involves the completion of the Household Enquiry Form (HEF) which gathers the names of those who are eligible to register and resident at a household. The HEF does not actually get the person registered as there is then a further stage required with the sending of an Invitation to Register (ITR) to those included on the HEF for them to register individually by either going on line to register or completing and returning the ITR. Electoral Registration Officers across the country send numerous follow up reminders and personal visits to households to encourage registration with the return of HEFs and ITRs.

As a result of the two stage process under IER there is now less emphasis on having a complete and accurate register for publication on 1 December as Electoral Registration Officers still continue to follow up non responding HEFs and ITRs after this date. Therefore, the 1 December register has now become a snapshot in time for data analysis whilst Electoral Registration Officers still continue to pursue outstanding HEFs and ITRs. Following the introduction of IER the emphasis has now moved to having a complete and accurate register for use at the elections in May. Therefore, the December register is not a true reflection of the register of electors that will be used for the elections this year.

Every effort is being made by Electoral Registration Officers and their teams to ensure that all those eligible to register to vote do so before the elections in May. Electoral Registration Officers across the country are still working on achieving a full and accurate register for these elections.

Their continued efforts may include the continuation of personal visits to households who have failed to respond to the initial and reminder HEFs or ITRs, along with sending a Household Notification Letter to every household in their area detailing the names of those who have registered to vote and inviting residents to register if they are not registered. They will also be working closely with universities, colleges, residential homes and other hard to reach groups to maximise registration.

The Electoral Commission is also running a public awareness campaign from February to April to encourage unregistered members of the public to apply to register for the elections in May. There is also a national registration drive taking place this week between 1 - 7 February. It is essential that all potential electors, are registered to vote in time for the elections this year.

Any drop in registrations could be partly explained by students having a choice over where they are registered. Students may prefer to be registered at their home address only. Prior to the introduction of IER many students were automatically registered at their term time address as well without even knowing it. Students now have to decide for themselves where they register. IER is about giving individuals, including students, more control over their democratic rights.

The key challenges identified following the introduction of IER have been home movers, those in care homes, students and attainers as they have to register individually under IER. Our post-election report published in July 2015 "[Elections and Individual Registration – The challenge of 2015](#)" highlighted that the registration of students and care homes under IER is extremely difficult under current legislative procedures and has resulted in far fewer students and care home residents being registered. Our report made the following recommendation:

"The UK Government should review the registration of students and care homes under IER, with a view to making legislative changes to allow EROs to directly register people at "institutions"."

The Chair of the Association of Electoral Administrators, Kate Crawford said:

"The transition to IER provided a period of intensive registration activity and presented an opportunity for Electoral Registration Officers to also focus efforts on removing duplicated and inaccurate entries from the register.

Electoral Registration Officers and their teams are still carrying out further work to maximise the completeness of the register in their area over the next few months so that they are confident that

entries on it are accurate and those entitled to register are registered in time to vote at the elections in May this year.”

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Notes to editors:

1. The Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) was founded in 1987 and is the professional body representing the interests of electoral administrators in the United Kingdom. It is a non-governmental and non-partisan body and has some 1,856 members, the majority of whom are employed by local authorities to provide electoral registration and election services.
2. Association of Electoral Administrators – A Company Limited by Guarantee - Registered in England and Wales No. 2406897
3. Registered Office: Rice and Co, Harance House, Rumer Hill Road, Cannock, Staffs WS11 0ET.
4. AEA post-election report 2015: [Elections and Individual Registration – The challenge of 2015](#)