

Appendix 1 - the survey

The response rate to the survey

The survey was sent to the Chief Executive of 352 local authorities in England responsible for compiling the electoral register on 22nd March 1999. A deadline of 12th April was set for the return of the survey. The chase up of non-respondents started on 19th April. Contact was made with all non-returning local authorities that were not due to hold elections in May (i.e. 32 London boroughs, eleven unitaries and a singular district council). Each local authority was telephoned on at least three separate occasions requesting their completed survey. 220 reminder surveys with an additional covering letter were sent to all non-responding authorities on 17th May 1999. A new deadline of 11th June was set. A third copy of the survey was sent to the Chief Executive of all non-responding local authorities on 15th June 1999, setting a final deadline of the 5th July 1999. We received a total of 250 completed surveys a response rate of 71%. Table A1 shows that the response rate by type of local authority varied by 9% between the District councils (69%) and the Metropolitan boroughs (78%). Table A2 shows the response rate according to the political control of the local authority following the May 1999 elections.

Table A1: The response rate to the survey by type of authority			
	N	Number of completed surveys	Response rate (%)
London boroughs	32	24	75
Metropolitan boroughs	36	28	78
Unitaries	46	34	74
District councils	23 8	164	69
Total	352	250	71

Table A2: The response rate to the survey by political control			
	N	Number of completed surveys	Response rate (%)
Labour councils	13 6	102	75
Conservative councils	66	42	64
Lib Dem councils	26	22	85
Other councils	10	6	60

Turnout at local elections

No overall control	11 4	78	68
Total	35 2	250	71

Appendix 2 - increasing electoral registration and turnout - a checklist for local authorities

Based on responses to this and previous surveys, on the expertise of the Association of Electoral Administrators and on 'best practice' in a number of local authorities, we have drawn up a list of ideas and innovations for improving the process of registration and encouraging greater public participation at elections.

Registration

- Design your own Form A which is pre-printed, bar-coded and colour-coded.
- Use personal canvassers to produce the electoral register.
- Carry out an extensive training session for new canvassers.
- Split the canvass areas into smaller, more manageable pieces.
- Use electoral registration calling cards if a household is out when a canvasser visits.
- Set up a payment-by-results system for canvassers.
- Mention the availability of credit on forms to encourage people to register.
- Use the telephone to contact non-responding households.
- Use a prize draw (or similar) to encourage registration.
- Use a 'threatening letter' at the end of the registration period.
- Consider prosecuting non-responders.
- Target students by sending forms earlier, use advertising and work with the Student Union. Give presentations to schools about registration.
- Liaise with other departments in your local authority (e.g. Council Tax and Housing).
- Work in a consortia of authorities to try to increase registration.
- Review the authority's policy of carrying names forward in the electoral register.
- Consider the authority's policy of anonymous registration.

Absent voting

- Include information about absent voting on Form A and/or on a leaflet delivered with Form A.
- Send information about absent voting to institutions such as residential homes, hospitals, hostels, and universities.
- Include information about absent voting on poll cards.
- Send poll cards out at an earlier date - allowing enough time for electors to use an absent vote.
- Consider different ways of advertising the facility of absent voting.

Poll cards and polling places/stations

- Review the policy of whether poll cards are hand-delivered or posted.
- Deliver poll cards at an earlier date - allowing enough time for electors to use an absent vote.
- Include information about absent voting on poll cards.
- Consider changing the text and appearance of the poll card.
- Provide ramps and polling booths for the disabled at all polling stations.
- Keep the location of polling places/stations under constant review.

Turnout

- Explore new ways to advertise the election (e.g. use the Council web-site).
- Deliver a leaflet or letter to all residents providing information on the election and encouraging them to 'Use Their Vote'.
- Use the local media to provide information about the election.
- Give presentations to schools about elections. Target an advertising campaign on attainners.
- Have an Electoral Services stall at local shows and exhibitions.
- Work in a consortia of authorities to try to increase turnout - and to spread the cost of initiatives.
- Provide additional polling stations in areas where electors have some distance to travel in order to vote.
- Consider changing the location of polling places/stations to ease the convenience of voting.
- Consult the public to discover the reasons for not voting in elections.

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