

Electoral Administration Act 2006 – Fact sheet

The Electoral Administration Act aims to tackle four key areas at the core of a healthy democracy.

Improving Access and Engagement: The Electoral Administration Act provides the basis for access to registration, postal votes, and voting on polling day by making the following changes:

- Introduces a duty on EROs to undertake certain steps to maximise the register.
- Extending the last date someone can register after an election has been called (11 days before polling day).
- Enables voters to register anonymously if they meet the relevant criteria.
- Introduces a framework for the Co-ordinated Online Record of Electors (CORE) to improve the accuracy and integrity of electoral registers.
- Reduces the age required for a candidate to stand at an election from 21 to 18.
- Establishes a framework for administrators to review polling stations regularly to ensure that they provide people with proper access.
- Improves information available to voters by enabling administrators to provide guidance in a variety of languages and formats.
- Extends the right for detained mental health patients (other than those detained under criminal powers) who have been given permission to leave hospital on a temporary basis to vote in person, as well as by post or proxy.
- Allows parents or those with caring responsibilities to take children into polling stations with them when they go to vote.
- Gives Returning Officers a new power to promote elections and provides a ring-fenced fund for publicity and promotional activity.
- Provides for pre-poll information to be sent to all electors ahead of polling day, including details about their vote.
- Introduces a simpler and more convenient declaration of identity for postal voters, removing the need for a witness.
- Introduces clearer rules for candidates and political parties participating in elections and reduces bureaucracy for smaller parties and independent candidates.
- Allows for the piloting of photographs on ballot papers, following a full policy consultation.
- Abolishes the common law rule that prevented certain people with mental impairments from voting, in order to ensure that they are not prevented from participating in the electoral process.
- Allows for the extension of service voter declarations up to 5 years and for the Ministry of Defence to maintain a record of registration options of service personnel

Improving Confidence: The Electoral Administration Act will improve security and transparency by making the following changes:

- Creates two new elections offences in order to provide stronger deterrents against electoral fraud. These are for supplying false information or failing to supply information to the electoral registration officer at any time and for falsely applying for a postal or proxy vote.

- Provides for signatures and dates of births to be provided on postal vote applications and postal vote statement, enabling checks to be carried out.
- Introduces a marked register of postal votes received, similar to that currently used for polling station voters.
- Revises the offence of undue influence, enabling the offence to be effective even where influence has not led to any action being taken.
- Improves the security of ballot papers, replacing stamping instruments with a security mark and enabling the use of barcodes on ballots to help with the administration of lost or stolen postal votes / replacement ballot papers.
- Allows accredited observers into polling stations to observe the electoral process, and at other parts of the process, such as the count.
- Requires voters to sign for their ballot paper at the polling station to deter fraud.
- Increases the length of time available for the police to carry out investigations into electoral fraud.
- Provides for statutory secrecy warnings to accompany postal and proxy voting papers to deter anyone from unlawfully attempting to influence another person's vote.

Extending Openness and Transparency in Party Financing: The Electoral Administration Act brings into line the reporting of loans from political parties with the donations regime by making the following changes;

- Introduces a new regime for regulation of loans to political parties based on the existing donations rules.

Maintaining Professional Delivery of Elections: The Electoral Administration Act will support top quality administration of elections, providing a clear vision of good electoral services and how they are delivered by making the following changes:

- Provides a new power for administrators to rectify clerical and administrative errors (such as mismatched serial numbers on postal votes) during the course of the election, and on polling day.
- Supports the administration of postal votes by enabling automated production of postal vote documents, including by replacing the counterfoil on ballot papers with a separate list to record ballots issued to electors.
- Introduces simpler and more flexible funding arrangements for national elections by reducing micro-management by central Government.
- Establishes performance standards to promote best practice in the administration of elections.
- Introduces a power for the Electoral Commission to obtain from returning officers statements of expenditure on elections, ensuring greater transparency and providing accurate data on overall electoral spending.
- Improves the nominations process, providing administrators with a dedicated period of 24 hours to check nominations before the publication of the statement of persons nominated and enabling administrators to correct minor errors on nomination papers.
- Gives new powers to the Electoral Commission, enabling it to fulfil its statutory duties to monitor and advise on electoral law and processes.
- Allows for pre-consolidation changes to be made to existing electoral law, to facilitate any possible future consolidation of electoral law.