

Report of the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland 2012-2013

*Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 9(1) of the
Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006*

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5 September 2013*

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The Rt. Hon Theresa Villiers MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Northern Ireland Office
1 Horse Guards Road
LONDON
SW1A 2HQ

10 June 2013

Dear Secretary of State,

I have the honour, in accordance with section 9(1) of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006, to present this Report on how I have discharged my functions for the year ending 31 March 2013.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Graham Shields', written in a cursive style.

Graham Shields
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

St. Anne's House
15 Church Street
Belfast
BT1 1ER

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present my third Annual Report which outlines the work of my colleagues in the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland during the year ending 31 March 2013.

The absence of a Northern Ireland wide election during the course of the year allowed my staff to contribute to the work of our election planning review. This was a significant piece of work and I am extremely grateful to my colleagues for their hard work and positive contribution to the process.

The Electoral Commission report on continuous registration in Northern Ireland, published in November 2012, highlighted concerns about the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register. As a consequence of the report's findings, the Secretary of State has accepted my recommendation for a full canvass to be held in the autumn of 2013 and my staff are currently busy planning and preparing for this event.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contribution of a long serving colleague, Mrs Margaret McMullen, the Head of Corporate Services, whose contribution to electoral services in Northern Ireland was recognised by the richly deserved award of a MBE in the Birthday Honours List 2012.



Graham Shields
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland

10 June 2013

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SECTION 1 - INTRODUCTION

Electoral Administration in Northern Ireland

1.1 The arrangements for electoral administration in Northern Ireland are different from elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The system in Northern Ireland is administered centrally by the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) for Northern Ireland who is a statutory office holder appointed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The CEO is assisted by the staff of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI), the administrative structure created to support the CEO in the discharge of his or her duties. The CEO is both the electoral registration officer for all 18 constituencies in Northern Ireland and returning officer for all elections and referendums in that jurisdiction. The CEO's main duties and responsibilities are set out in the Electoral Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1962 (as amended by Article 6 of the Electoral Law (Northern Ireland) Order 1972), the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006. The Accounting Officer of the Northern Ireland Office is responsible to Parliament for all expenditure incurred by the CEO.

Role of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO)

1.2 The main duties of the CEO are:

- to act as electoral registration officer for all constituencies in Northern Ireland;
- to act as returning officer for all elections and referendums in Northern Ireland;
- to recommend to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland by 16 April each year whether or not a registration canvass should be conducted;
- to act as an assessor to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland;
- to act as an assessor to the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner; and

- to lead and manage the EONI.
- 1.3 The CEO is required to report to the Secretary of State on an annual basis on how he has discharged his functions. Section 9(2) of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 requires him to include in his Report an assessment of the extent to which the relevant registration objectives in Northern Ireland have been met in the year to which the report relates.

Role of the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland (EONI)

- 1.4 The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland is the name given to the group of permanent and casual staff who support the CEO in the performance of his duties. It operates from a headquarters building in Belfast and area offices in Belfast (co-located with Headquarters) and six other locations across Northern Ireland.

SECTION 2 - PERFORMANCE AGAINST TARGETS

- 2.1 This section summarises the performance achieved against the six Targets and thirteen Development Objectives set out in the Business Plan 2012/13 which can be viewed at www.eoni.org.uk.
- 2.2 The six Targets were achieved in full.
- 2.3 Twelve of the thirteen Development Objectives were achieved in full. Further information can be found at Annex A.

SECTION 3 – REGISTRATION

Statistics

- 3.1 The revised register published on 1 December 2012 contained 1,247,312 electors; a net increase of 20,191 compared with the previous year. By March 2013 that number had risen to 1,256,119.
- 3.2 During the period covered by this report 40,270 new registrants were added to the register, 45,285 changed their qualifying address whilst 20,079 were removed as a result of death or becoming ineligible. 7,358 other modifications were also made to the register. The total number of changes made was 112,289.

Continuous Registration

- 3.3 Continuous registration replaced the annual canvass in 2006 and in the period since then the system has generally been regarded as effective in progressing the statutory registration objectives. Since 2006, the numbers on the register have continued to grow to a point where we now have more people on the electoral register in Northern Ireland than ever before.
- 3.4 It is difficult to objectively assess the accuracy of the annual register, but since the introduction of continuous registration my staff have worked determinately to ensure that over 99% of those recorded on the register have been verified by surname, date of birth and National Insurance Number against records held by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) or through verification of supporting documentation.
- 3.5 In the spring of 2012, the Electoral Commission conducted research to assess the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register in Northern Ireland. The research was welcomed by me, as the only previous study of the effectiveness of the continuous registration process was completed in early 2008.

- 3.6 Based on the findings of the research, the Electoral Commission published a report entitled ‘Continuous electoral registration in Northern Ireland’ in November 2012. The report concluded that the register was 73% complete and 78% accurate. The findings of the report were extremely disappointing, given the high level of registration activity and the absence of any indicators of inaccuracy or missing registrations. In this regard, I believe it is worth mentioning that whilst there were 668,000 people who voted at the combined polls in May 2011, only 691 (approximately 0.1%) were unable to do so because they were not registered or were registered at the wrong address.
- 3.7 When conducting their research, the Electoral Commission adopted a new measure of ‘completeness’, defined as ‘Every person who is entitled to have an entry in an electoral register is registered.’¹ This replaced the definition of ‘comprehensiveness’ used in their 2008 report which was defined as ‘...the percentage of the eligible population who are on the register regardless of where they live.’² Under the new definition, an elector must be registered at his current address for the entry to be regarded as complete. The use of the term ‘completeness’, whilst more precise, was in my opinion unfairly compared against the 2008 definition of ‘comprehensiveness’ and exaggerated the extent of the decline. Using the measure of comprehensiveness as defined in the Commission’s 2008 report, the electoral register had actually improved from 83% to 88.4% comprehensive when measured against the eligible population figures provided by the Registrar General.
- 3.8 The Electoral Commission suggested that the high level of registration was inflated by the inclusion of erroneous records, the majority of which related to those no longer resident at their recorded address. The report also stated that the processes currently employed to manage the register were failing to keep pace with population change and home movements and recommended household registration activity to address the problems.
- 3.9 I wrote to the Secretary of State in December 2012 recommending that a canvass should be held in the autumn of 2013 and my recommendation was subsequently approved. By March 2013 planning was well underway and

¹ Electoral Commission report ‘Continuous Registration in Northern Ireland’, page 3

² Electoral Commission report ‘Continuous Registration in Northern Ireland’, page 9

arrangements for the recruitment of approximately 1500 canvass staff had commenced.

Data Matching

3.10 The Electoral Commission report on continuous registration also recommended that I should examine the efficacy of data matching processes currently employed by the EONI as well as investigating potential new data sources to enhance existing data matching arrangements. I appointed Deloitte in January 2013 to examine these issues and their report, entitled 'Review of Data Matching Sources', was submitted in March 2013. They noted that the processes currently used for matching data with the electoral register are manually intensive and time-consuming and limit the extent to which the information can be effectively utilised.

3.11 The Deloitte report made a number of recommendations, all of which I accepted and will be pursued during the forthcoming year. The most significant recommendation relates to the proposed creation of an integrated database of all data sources used by the EONI in order to improve data matching processes. Colleagues from the Northern Ireland Statistical Research Agency (NISRA) have kindly agreed to assist in the development of the database and a service level agreement is currently being prepared to allow their staff to commence work on this project early in the next reporting year. NISRA will also be assisting with the data matching processes required for the autumn 2013 canvass.

Information by Public Authorities

3.12 The validity of the continuous registration process depends on the provision of information to me by a number of public authorities. Except in the case of deaths notified by the Registrar General, no change can be made to the register until the individual elector submits a registration application confirming the accuracy of the information provided by the public authority.

Business Services Organisation

3.13 The main source of information on changes of address of registered electors continued to be the Business Services Organisation (BSO). On a quarterly basis that organisation provides information on all those registered with any part of the health service who had, according to that organisation's records, changed their name or address. No medical or other sensitive information is provided. On receipt of such notification, a letter is sent to all the individuals reminding them to submit an application if they are not already registered or to update the details of their name and address if they have changed since the date of their last application. During the year, more than 170,950 letters and reminder letters were issued. There was an increased return rate due to the introduction of a new processing methodology; however, it is a cause of concern that over half of those contacted still fail to respond despite receiving a reminder letter.

Department of Work and Pensions

3.14 The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) supplies information on an annual database showing the National Insurance Number, full name, date of birth and address of anyone over 16 with a Northern Ireland postcode and quarterly updates of information on those attaining 16 years. This information is invaluable to my staff in verifying information given on the registration form and is used to make early contact with those who leave school aged 16, many of whom would otherwise be missed during the Schools Initiative outlined below. I recorded difficulties in receiving this data in 2011-12 which were overcome in this reporting year. The DWP database continues to be a main source for verifying registration applications.

Registrar General

3.15 The Registrar General for Northern Ireland continued to provide weekly lists of all those whose deaths had been registered in Northern Ireland, whilst the Senior Coroner provided monthly lists of those whose death was awaiting an inquest. Using this information the details of 12,186 deceased persons were

removed from the register. Information was also provided on the 8,035 marriages and civil partnerships that took place in Northern Ireland during the course of the year.

Post-Primary Schools/ Further Education Colleges

3.16 The Schools Initiative was undertaken between September 2012 and January 2013. During that period all but 1 post-primary school in Northern Ireland with more than 10 pupils received a visit from my staff.

3.17 During the course of the year my staff also attended fresher events at Further Education College campuses throughout Northern Ireland. By February 2013, 11,570 attainees had been added to the electoral register as a result of the Schools Initiative and the engagement with Further Education Colleges.

District Councils

3.18 EONI maintains a database of all residential accommodation in Northern Ireland. To assist in maintaining its accuracy all district councils were required to provide me with information on new residential properties on a monthly basis. This process appears to have been working satisfactorily.

3.19 The POINTER system is intended to provide a comprehensive property database for use by all public sector organisations in Northern Ireland and my staff continued to take an active role in the POINTER Stakeholder Forum. POINTER allocates a unique property reference number (UPRN) to each property. With the assistance of NISRA, the property database on the EONI system was matched with the POINTER address file early in 2013. A 91% match was attained and the UPRNs of those matched have been added to the EROS system. This UPRN will play an integral part in future data matching.

National Fraud Initiative

3.20 My staff continued to participate in the National Fraud Initiative through the provision of registration data.

Northern Ireland Office

- 3.21 The NIO continued to provide information on all those in Northern Ireland who became British citizens until 1 November 2012. During that period letters were sent by my staff to 341 individuals who were not already registered. By 31 March 2013 approximately 90% of them had been registered.
- 3.22 The supply of information on new British citizens was temporarily suspended in November 2012 pending the introduction of legislation to appoint the NIO as a designated authority for the purpose of supplying information on electoral registration to the CEO. The enabling legislation is contained in the Representation of the People (Northern Ireland) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. It is anticipated that the supply of this information will resume early in the new reporting year.

Other Registration Initiatives

- 3.23 A pilot 'signature refresh' project was completed in the Omagh Area Office in 2012 combined with a postal vote review. Under continuous registration those who do not change their details on the register have no opportunity to refresh their signature. This can have implications when a postal vote is completed and the signature on the Declaration of Identity fails to match that given at registration. The project involved writing to those on the permanent absent voters list asking them to refresh their signature by completing a registration form. Over 3,000 letters were issued and just over 2,000 updated their signatures. This successful initiative was to be copied across all Area Offices, but with a canvass in 2013 most signatures will be refreshed on the canvass form and it is not considered necessary.
- 3.24 Following the withdrawal of the free Prize draw incentive, I obtained permission from NIO to implement a new initiative offering iTunes vouchers to those registering in the 16-17 age range. Using information received from the quarterly DWP database, letters were sent to 11,578 persons who were not currently registered enclosing a registration form and offering the chance to win a £25 iTunes voucher. The response was poor with only 17% of those

written to responding. It is not regarded an efficient use of resources and has not been repeated. Targeting this age group has been considered as part of the Deloitte report into data matching and alternative methods of contact for this group are being considered.

Fermanagh Addressing

3.25 Following the decision of Fermanagh District Council to issue official addresses to around 15,000 homes in rural Fermanagh, the Omagh Office began a full review of the property database in that area. My staff attended meetings held by Fermanagh District Council and using contacts with Land and Property Services requested and received data updates to amend address details. This involved changing house numbers, street names, townland names and spelling and postcodes. The work is ongoing at the end of this report as revised postcodes were not finalised by Royal Mail until March 2013.

Registration Surgeries

3.26 I wrote to the main political parties in January 2013 to request their assistance in securing public attendance at registration surgeries throughout Northern Ireland during the months of February and March. Area Electoral Officers arranged a total of 38 surgeries, most of which were well attended, and resulted in over 1,500 new registrants being added to the register. Resources permitting, it is hoped to repeat this initiative later in the forthcoming report year after the canvass has been completed.

Meeting the Registration Objectives

3.27 Under Section 9 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 I am required to include in the Annual Report an assessment of the extent to which the relevant registration objectives have been met.

3.28 These objectives are set out in Section 10ZB of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and are –

“to secure, so far as reasonably practicable –

- (a) that every person who is entitled to be registered in a register is registered in it,
- (b) that no person who is not entitled to be registered in a register is registered in it, and
- (c) that none of the required information relating to any person registered in a register is false.”

First Registration Objective

3.29 The total electorate on 1 December 2012 was 1,247,312. The Registrar General and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency advised that the estimated eligible population on that date was 1,411,100. The register published on 1 December 2012 was, on that basis, 88.4% comprehensive in comparison with the register published on 1 December 2011 which was 87.8% comprehensive.

3.30 The ways in which it is intended to offer those individuals who are not registered the opportunity to do so are outlined in the EONI Business Plan 2012/13 which can be viewed at www.eoni.org.uk.

3.31 It must, however, be accepted that there are a number of individuals who take a conscious decision not to register. When challenged about their attitude reasons given have included a total lack of interest in politics, a lack of trust in politicians and fear of having their addresses discovered by family members, debt collectors or the law enforcement agencies. Whilst these individuals will continue to be given every encouragement to register it is, at present, their right not to do so.

Second and Third Registration Objective

3.32 As previously referred to, an independent assessment of the accuracy of the December 2011 register, undertaken on behalf of the Electoral Commission, was published in November 2012. It concluded that the revised register was 78% accurate.

Recommendation about a Canvass

3.33 As mentioned at 3.9, a canvass for autumn 2013 has been recommended and approved by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

SECTION 4 - ELECTIONS

Mid Ulster Parliamentary By-election March 2013

- 4.1 A by-election for the Mid Ulster parliamentary constituency was held on 7 March 2013. The eligible electorate was 67,192 and the percentage turnout was 55.7%.
- 4.2 The count was held in Cookstown Leisure Centre and commenced immediately after the close of poll. The result was declared at 1.15am on 8 March 2013.

Election Review

- 4.3 During the course of the year, I completed a comprehensive review of election planning. The review produced a total of 97 recommendations, of which 70 related to refinements of existing processes and procedures that can be implemented at little or no cost. The Election Review report, which I published in October 2012, concentrated on the remaining 27 recommendations which are more strategically important in shaping how future elections will be planned and organised.
- 4.4 21 of the Election Review recommendations were piloted during the Mid Ulster by-election, all of which are considered to have contributed towards improving the efficiency of the process. They included, for example, the appointment of dedicated Polling Station Managers to manage the larger polling places and ensure the correct application of close of poll procedures. I also prepared a voluntary code of conduct that was agreed with all the main parties to regulate the conduct of party supporters at polling places. It worked very well and no complaints were received about the behaviour of canvassers in the vicinity of polling places.
- 4.5 Other work taken forward as a result of the review's recommendations include the re-design of EONI website which went live in April 2013. The new website contains more information and is intended to be more user-friendly.

My staff also developed a social media policy and will be going live on Twitter at the start of the new reporting year. This will enable us to monitor tweets from the media and politicians and provide another valuable source of communication for publicising information about elections and electoral registration.

E-Counting

- 4.6 In May 2012, I travelled to Edinburgh accompanied by my senior staff and some members of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister's Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly to observe the e-count of the Scottish Local Government election. The STV system of proportional representation was used at this election and the count was completed very efficiently within eight hours of commencement.
- 4.7 I subsequently arranged a demonstration of e-counting at Belfast City Hall at the end of May 2012 and invitations to attend were extended to local politicians and staff from local councils. The feedback from all who attended was very positive.
- 4.8 I also wrote to all of the main political parties and asked for their views on the proposed use of e-counting. Most of the responses were positive, although some concern was expressed about the financial costs involved.
- 4.9 The Election Review report included a recommendation that e-counting should be considered for use at future STV elections in Northern Ireland. I have written to the Secretary of State to inform her of my views in connection with this matter.

Electoral Offences

- 4.10 There were no cases of electoral fraud reported or detected during the year.

SECTION 5 – CENTRAL SERVICES

Premises

- 5.1 There were no changes to the premises occupied by Headquarters or the eight Area Electoral Offices. I conducted a review of the EONI estate during the course of the year and concluded that the locations and number of offices should remain unchanged. I have been able to take advantage of the downturn in the property market to negotiate more favourable lease conditions. The next planned review of the estate will be in 2015.

Staff

Recruitment

- 5.2 An external recruitment campaign was undertaken for a part-time Assistant Area Electoral Officer in Newtownards. There were no resignations or retirements during the course of the year.
- 5.3 Preparations were put in place to engage 1,500 staff to work at the canvass in autumn 2013. An advertisement for electoral canvassers was published in March 2013.

Training

- 5.4 A training plan for 2012/13 was drawn up by the HR Section from personal development plans for each staff member in agreement with line managers.
- 5.5 In order to continue to ensure compliance with public procurement policy, a number of staff completed the tender evaluation training through the Centre for Applied Learning.
- 5.6 All EONI staff at EO2 grade and above completed a refresher on competency based Recruitment and Selection panel member training. All staff attended training in Health and Safety awareness.

- 5.7 During the year two staff members attained the Certificate of Electoral Administration. Two staff are in the final stages of completing the certificate.

Information Assurance – Staff Awareness

- 5.8 Procedures for the protection and safe handling of information, including protectively marked material and personal information, are in place and complied with. All staff successfully completed a refresher of the Protecting Information e-learning programme through the National School of Government.

Equality

- 5.9 Following approval of EONI's revised Equality Scheme in July 2012, a summary version was developed and a briefing document was issued to all staff. A five year review of EONI's Disability Action Plan (DAP) was undertaken on the two duties to promote positive attitudes towards disabled people and encourage participation by disabled people in public life. The review assessed what had been achieved and how to build on success. A Report on the DAP Review was sent to the Equality Commission in September 2012.
- 5.10 A new Disability Action Plan for 2012-2015 received final Board approval during the year and a 12 week consultation period closed in December 2012. A survey was issued to all EONI staff to identify any accessibility barriers or examples of good practice staff may have encountered in other organisations. Following responses received an action plan is currently being taken forward. In January 2013 EONI completed a benchmarking exercise with an accessibility consultant from Action on Hearing Loss to assist with work towards achieving the "Louder than Words" charter mark.

Sick Absence

5.11 Absence in relation to short-term sickness continues to be low. However the overall absence rate, which includes long-term sickness, was 5.2% during the year. Monthly monitoring of EONI sick absence levels is undertaken by the Management Board.

Funding

5.12 Total operational funding provided to EONI for 2012/13 was £2.698m compared with £2.710m in 2011/12. Total expenditure excluding capital was £2.666m, just under 99% of budget. Capital expenditure was £142k.

5.13 Approximately 140 separate procurement exercises were completed. The largest contract awarded was for Electoral Registration Data Management, Print and Mailing Services. Based on prompt payment statistics, 856 invoices were sent to NIO Central Finance and the prompt payment target was achieved.

5.14 Funding for elections is non-voted money and does not form part of EONI core funding. Election expenditure is accounted for in the annual Returning Officers' Expenses which are audited by the National Audit Office before being presented to Parliament.

5.15 The budget for the Mid Ulster by-election held in March 2013 was £148.5k. Actual expenditure at 31 March 2013 was £134k, excluding candidates mailing costs of £15.8k.

Stakeholder and Media Relations

Media

5.16 Sole responsibility for all matters relating to public awareness of elections and registration remained with the Electoral Commission.

5.17 I issued a number of press releases during the year and participated in a number of printed and broadcast interviews on electoral registration and election issues.

5.18 Area Electoral Officers continued to develop good relationships with their local newspapers and radio stations. These continue to be used to good effect to give free publicity for local registration and election matters.

5.19 I also continued to receive invaluable support in their dealings with the media from staff of the Northern Ireland Information Service within the Northern Ireland Office.

Political Parties

5.20 The Northern Ireland political parties were consulted on all planned initiatives by EONI and some provided valuable and constructive comments in relation to the recommendations of the Election Review process.

5.21 I attended all meetings of the Assembly Parties Panel, the meetings convened by the Electoral Commission to discuss electoral matters. At these meetings, I provided information on changes made to electoral law and practice and on forthcoming initiatives.

Electoral Commission

5.22 A mutually beneficial and constructive working relationship continued to exist at all levels between my staff and the Head of the Commission's Belfast Office and his staff.

Northern Ireland Office

5.23 I worked closely with the staff from the Constitutional and Political Group and the Corporate Governance Unit at the Northern Ireland Office throughout the year. There was daily contact on a range of issues, including suggested amendments to various aspects of electoral legislation.

5.24 I also attended regular meetings of the Electoral Policy and Co-ordination Group and the Electoral Advisory Board in London.

Helpline

5.25 The Helpline at Headquarters dealt with 25,712 enquiries during the year. Customer service standards were achieved or exceeded throughout the year.

Website

5.26 103,601 visits were made to the website during the year and 49,187 documents were downloaded.

5.27 The EONI website was redesigned and went live in April 2013. The new website allows users to find their local office and polling station by entering their postcode. It will also incorporate the new EONI Twitter account. Overall the new website is more modern in design and should hopefully allow users to find information more quickly.

Records Management

5.28 5 requests were received for information under the Freedom of Information Act and 57 under the Data Protection Act.

Electoral Identity Cards

5.29 25,146 Electoral Identity Cards were issued by my staff in 2012-13.

Customer Service

5.30 The rate of customer satisfaction remained high throughout the year with an average satisfaction rate of 99%, based on the analysis of questionnaires completed by members of the public calling to the area offices.

Customer Service Excellence

5.31 I am pleased to report that, following an assessment in March 2013, EONI has been accredited with the Customer Service Excellence Award for a further period of one year commencing 1 April 2013. Two ‘compliance plus’ awards were made by the assessor for the revised website which will have a user focussed design and for the extra evidence documentation accepted for registration aimed at assisting those in the hard to reach groups with the registration process.

Complaints

5.32 During the year 11 formal complaints were received compared with 92 in 2011/12. The nature and outcome of the formal complaints is summarised in Table 1 below: –

Table 1 – Formal Complaints Received 2012/13

Nature of Complaint	No.	Outcome
Registration evidence requirements/ tone of letter	5	Relevant legislation explained/ evidence requirements and tone of letter revised
Registration issues/difficulties encountered	4	Apology issued/remedial action taken where applicable
Postal Voting deadlines	1	Relevant legislation explained
Layout of EONI website	1	Advised of remedial action planned
Total	11	

IT System

5.33 EONI installed a fully integrated Blackberry email solution to provide secure mobile computing facilities in line with Government approved requirements. Contingency arrangements continued to be tested on a quarterly basis at a remote back-up site to ensure that EONI could continue to offer an acceptable level of service in the event of the loss of Headquarters facilities.

SECTION 6 – CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Management Board

- 6.1 There were no significant changes to the composition or practices of the Board during the year. It continued to meet monthly or more often as required. I chaired the Board which was comprised of both the Assistant and Temporary Assistant CEO (until September 2012 when the post was rescinded) and the Heads of both Corporate Services and Information Services. Two members of staff (NIPSA representatives) received copies of all Board papers and were invited to all the meetings.
- 6.2 In addition to taking all strategic business decisions, the Board reviewed performance against targets and development objectives, finance, contracts and procurement, staffing issues, risk management and complaints. The Board continued to take account of equality and human rights considerations as part of the normal decision making process. The Board also acted as the EONI audit committee because of the small size of the organisation.

Corporate Social Responsibility

- 6.3 EONI maintained its membership of Business in the Community during the reporting year and staff continued to participate in the “Time to Read” programme and the 2012 Christmas Appeal to support Action for Children Northern Ireland.

Internal Audit

- 6.4 During 2012/13, internal audit services were provided by Ministry of Justice. The auditors undertook planned audits of four areas agreed by the Board. All audits received a satisfactory rating.
- 6.5 The auditors made a total of seven recommendations, all of which the Board accepted. All recommendations were implemented in full by 31 March 2013.

6.6 Progress reports were provided to the NIO's Audit and Risk Committee.

Boundaries

6.7 I am an assessor to the Boundary Commission for Northern Ireland. During the year, I attended a number of meetings of the Commission and provided them with information and advice to assist them in the discharge of their duties.

District Electoral Areas Review

6.8 The District Electoral Areas Commissioner is currently engaged in a review of the Northern Ireland District Electoral Areas. I am one of a number of assessors appointed to provide professional advice and support to the Commissioner in the delivery of his duties.

SECTION 7 – THE AREA OFFICES

Introduction

- 7.1 There are eight Area Electoral Offices located across Northern Ireland to provide a point of contact for members of the public on electoral and registration matters.
- 7.2 The locations of these offices and the constituencies for which they were responsible are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Area Electoral Offices

LOCATION	CONSTITUENCIES
Londonderry/Derry	Foyle East Londonderry
Ballymena	North Antrim Mid Ulster
Omagh	West Tyrone Fermanagh & South Tyrone
Banbridge A	Upper Bann Newry & Armagh
Banbridge B	South Down Lagan Valley
Newtownabbey	Belfast North East Antrim South Antrim
Newtownards	Belfast East Strangford North Down
Belfast	Belfast South Belfast West

- 7.3 Each office is managed by an Area Electoral Officer who acted as deputy registration officer for either 2 or 3 constituencies. As such, these officers had, under my supervision, responsibility for all matters relating to electoral registration. Each Area Electoral Officer was supported by an Assistant Area Electoral Officer and a number of registration officers appropriate to the workload of that office.

7.4 The following paragraphs, whilst by no means covering all that was done, give an insight into the work of each office during the year.

Londonderry/Derry Area Electoral Office

7.5 The Londonderry/Derry Area Electoral Office at 20 Queen Street, Londonderry serves the Foyle and East Londonderry constituencies.

7.6 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by 4 permanent full time staff. Additional casual staff were employed as required.

7.7 During the year the electorate of the Foyle constituency increased by 1,417 whilst that of East Londonderry was increased by 962. There was a monthly average of 270 personal callers to the office.

7.8 In addition to participation in general registration initiatives such as the Schools Initiative in which 24 post-primary schools were visited, staff also attended the 3 Further Education Colleges within their area of responsibility to provide registration and electoral identity card clinics. All post-primary schools were successfully visited within the allocated timescales.

7.9 Staff also participated in a number of registration and electoral ID events aimed at encouraging registration.

Omagh Area Electoral Office

7.10 The Omagh Area Electoral Office at 21 Kevlin Avenue, Omagh serves the West Tyrone and Fermanagh and South Tyrone constituencies.

7.11 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by 3 permanent staff and by casual staff during particularly busy periods.

7.12 During the year West Tyrone constituency increased by 597 whilst Fermanagh and South Tyrone increased by 338. There was a monthly average of 132 callers to the office.

- 7.13 The Area Electoral Officer and his staff visited a total of 23 post-primary schools as part of the Schools Initiative during the reporting period. The office also provided registration and electoral identity card facilitation at each of South West College's three campuses, Omagh, Enniskillen and Dungannon, as well as targeting by post the students from the area registered at North West Regional College and Southern Regional College.
- 7.14 Staff also participated in a number of registration and electoral ID events aimed at encouraging registration.

Banbridge A Area Electoral Office

- 7.15 The Banbridge A Area Electoral Office is co-located with the other Banbridge office at 52 Bridge Street, Banbridge. It has responsibility for the Upper Bann and Newry and Armagh constituencies.
- 7.16 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by 2 permanent members of staff with additional casual staff being employed as required.
- 7.17 During the year the electorate in Upper Bann increased by 1,470 and Newry and Armagh increased by 1,219. There was a monthly average of 250 callers at the Banbridge A and B offices.
- 7.18 30 post-primary schools and 5 Further Education Colleges were visited between September and October 2012 resulting in 1,768 new registrations and 1,871 electoral identity card applications.
- 7.19 Staff also participated in a number of registration and electoral ID events aimed at encouraging registration.

Banbridge B Area Electoral Office

- 7.20 The Banbridge B Area Electoral Office is co-located with the other Banbridge

office at 52 Bridge Street, Banbridge. It serves the Lagan Valley and South Down constituencies.

- 7.21 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by 2 full time members of staff with additional assistance, as required, from casual staff.
- 7.22 During the year the electorate in South Down increased by 1,098 whilst that of Lagan Valley increased by 1,127.
- 7.23 During the course of the year a variety of registration initiatives were undertaken. These included a visit to all post-primary schools within the two constituencies and writing to all new students at Further Education Colleges, which resulted in the addition of 1,021 new registrants.
- 7.24 Staff also participated in a number of registration and electoral ID events aimed at encouraging registration.

Belfast Area Electoral Office

- 7.25 The Belfast Area Electoral Office is situated on the first floor of the Electoral Office Headquarters at 15 Church Street, Belfast. It serves the Belfast West and Belfast South constituencies.
- 7.26 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by 4.5 permanent members of staff. Additional casual staff were employed as required.
- 7.27 During the year the electorate of the Belfast South constituency increased by 1,620, whilst that of Belfast West increased by 1,074.
- 7.28 There was a monthly average of 647 personal callers to the office. This remains the highest number of callers at any area office and reflects the fact that many electors, registered outside the two constituencies for which the Belfast office has responsibility, find it convenient to call there when in the city centre.

- 7.29 20 post-primary schools were visited between September and October 2012 resulting in 1,655 new registrations. Further Education Colleges were also contacted by way of a mail out to all new students to encourage registration.
- 7.30 Staff also participated in a number of registration and electoral ID events aimed at encouraging registration.

Newtownards Area Electoral Office

- 7.31 The Newtownards office at 2(B) Regent Street, Newtownards serves the North Down, Belfast East and Strangford constituencies.
- 7.32 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by 4 permanent members of staff with further casual staff being engaged as required.
- 7.33 During the year the electorate of the Belfast East constituency increased by 1,023, whilst that of North Down increased by 984. The electorate of the Strangford constituency increased by 909. There was a monthly average of 321 personal callers to the office.
- 7.34 A total of 18 post-primary schools were visited as part of the Schools Initiative. A total of 1,724 young people were added to the register as a result of this process and 1,627 electoral identity cards were issued.
- 7.35 Further Education Colleges were visited and this, combined with a mail out of registration forms, resulted in 298 new registrants being added to the register.
- 7.36 Staff also participated in a number of registration and electoral ID events aimed at encouraging registration.

Newtownabbey Area Electoral Office

- 7.37 The Newtownabbey Area Electoral Office at 1-3 Portland Avenue, Glengormley serves the East Antrim, South Antrim and Belfast North constituencies.

- 7.38 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by 3 full time and 2 part time staff members on a job share basis. Additional casual staff were employed as required.
- 7.39 During the year the electorate of East Antrim constituency increased by 1,034, whilst that of Belfast North increased by 1,002. The electorate of the South Antrim constituency increased by 1,144. There was a monthly average of 210 personal callers to the office.
- 7.40 In addition to visiting 27 post-primary schools as part of the Schools Initiative, staff from the office also visited Further Education Colleges in their area of responsibility to encourage registration of first time voters. 1,482 additions to the register were made as a result of the school visits, whilst 229 new registrants were added following visits to the Further Education Colleges.
- 7.41 Staff also participated in a number of registration and electoral ID events aimed at encouraging registration.

Ballymena Area Electoral Office

- 7.42 The Ballymena Area Electoral Office is located at 122 Broughshane Street, Ballymena and serves the constituencies of Mid Ulster and North Antrim.
- 7.43 The Area Electoral Officer was supported by 2 permanent members of staff and 2 job share members of staff. Additional casual staff were employed as required.
- 7.44 During the year the electorate in the Mid Ulster constituency increased by 1,330 whilst that of North Antrim increased by 955. There was a monthly average of 187 personal callers to the office.
- 7.45 Staff from the office visited all 21 post-primary schools in the two constituencies during the Schools Initiative which ran from September to

December 2012. This resulted in an additional 1,691 young people being added to the register.

7.46 Staff also participated in a number of registration and electoral ID events aimed at encouraging registration.

7.47 The Ballymena Office chose The Samaritans as their nominated charity for the year. Fundraising activities included two members of staff completing a Firewalk Challenge where all proceeds went to The Samaritans.

Performance Against Targets and Development Objectives 2012/13

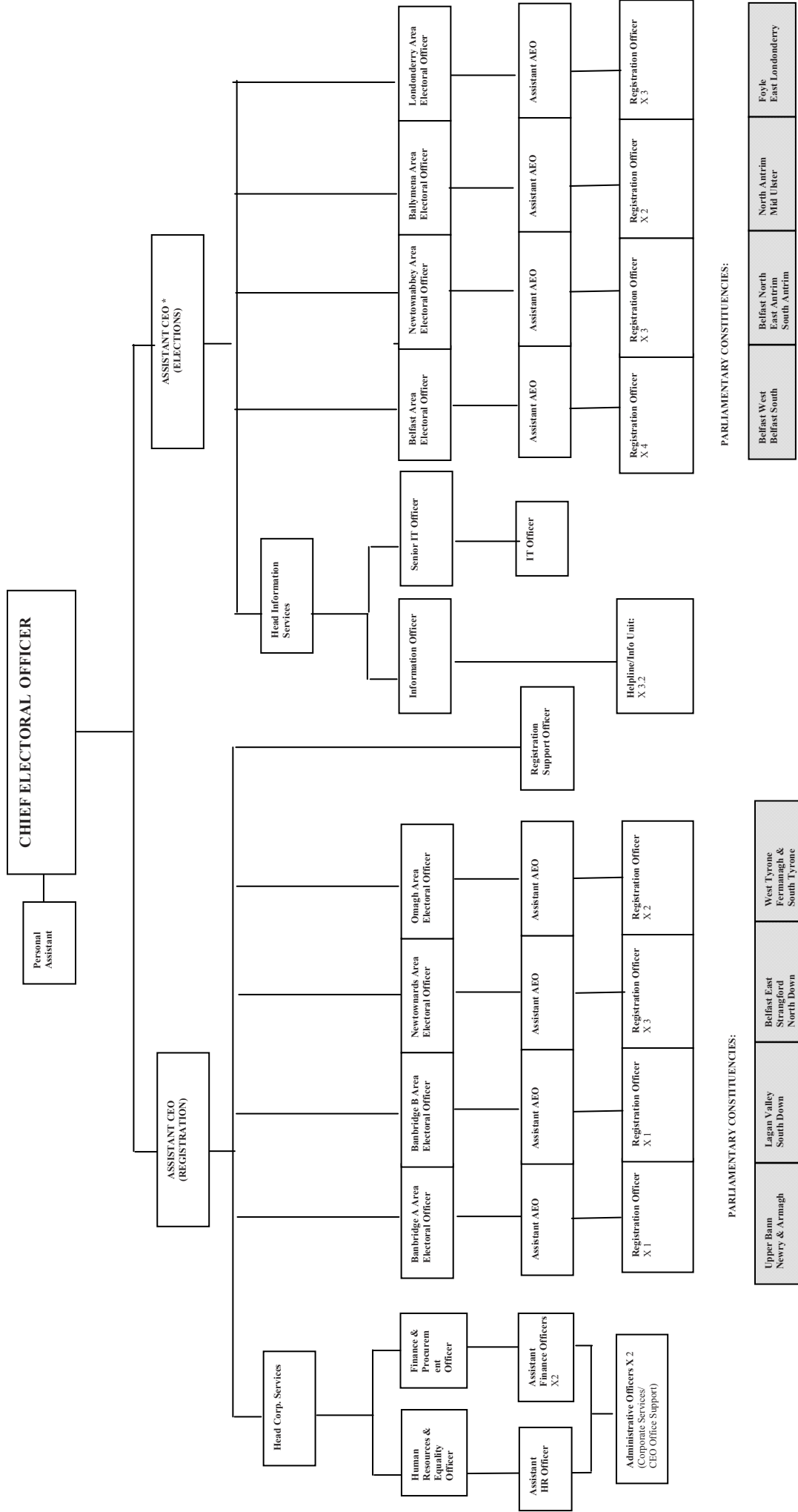
OT	On Target
A	Achieved
NA	Not Achieved
NP	Not Proceeding

Target:	Status	Comments
1 To publish on 1 December 2012 a register that contains more electors and is at least as accurate as the December 2011 register.	A	Register published on 1 December 2012 contained 20,191 more electors than December 2011 register. The register is therefore approximately 86% comprehensive. Information in relation to the name, date of birth and national insurance number of registrants is approximately 99% accurate when matched against 2011 census statistics prepared by the Northern Ireland Statistical Research Agency (NISRA). In respect of the redefined measure of accuracy and the newly introduced measure of completeness referred to by the Electoral Commission in its report on continuous registration published in November 2012, the figures are 78% and 71% respectively.
Development Objectives:	Status	Comments
1. By 16 April 2012 to recommend to the Secretary of State whether or not a full canvass should take place in autumn 2012.	A	Letter forwarded to Secretary of State on 18 December 2012 recommending a full canvass in 2013.

2.	By 31 December 2012 to increase registration of 16-17 year olds by visiting 95% of post-primary schools with at least 10 pupils of registration age who are not registered and by targeting those who have left full time education.	A	Schools visits target achieved. (99% of eligible schools visited). Over 11,000 16-17 year olds added to the register.
3.	By 31 March 2013 to formulate a consistent approach to improving the quality of the property database.	A	91% Unique Property Reference Number (UPRN) match was achieved.
4.	By 31 March 2013 to develop and implement Registration Performance Standards for Northern Ireland.	A	Work on draft standards completed and relevant data forwarded to the Electoral Commission.
Target:		Status	Comments
2.	Throughout the year to have in place an outline plan for the conduct of any Northern Ireland wide election.	A	Outline plan in place and is kept under review.
Development Objectives:		Status	Comments
1.	By 30 June 2012 close the account for the Northern Ireland Assembly elections.	NA	Account closed 31 July 2012. Late submission of invoices caused delay. All future contracts to include a clause that invoices must be submitted to EONI within 30 days from the date the goods or services are provided.
2.	By 31 March 2013 to have completed a full Election Review.	A	Election Review published in November 2012. Work currently ongoing to take forward the recommendations before the next scheduled elections in 2014.
3.	By 31 March 2013 to review the current recruitment and training strategy in relation to election staff.	A	Completed as part of the Election Review Project.
4.	By 31 March 2013 to investigate the possibility of using electronic counting for future elections and make recommendations to the Secretary of State.	A	Following receipt of feedback from political parties, the CEO wrote to the Secretary of State on 31 October 2012 recommending the introduction of e-counting for future STV elections.

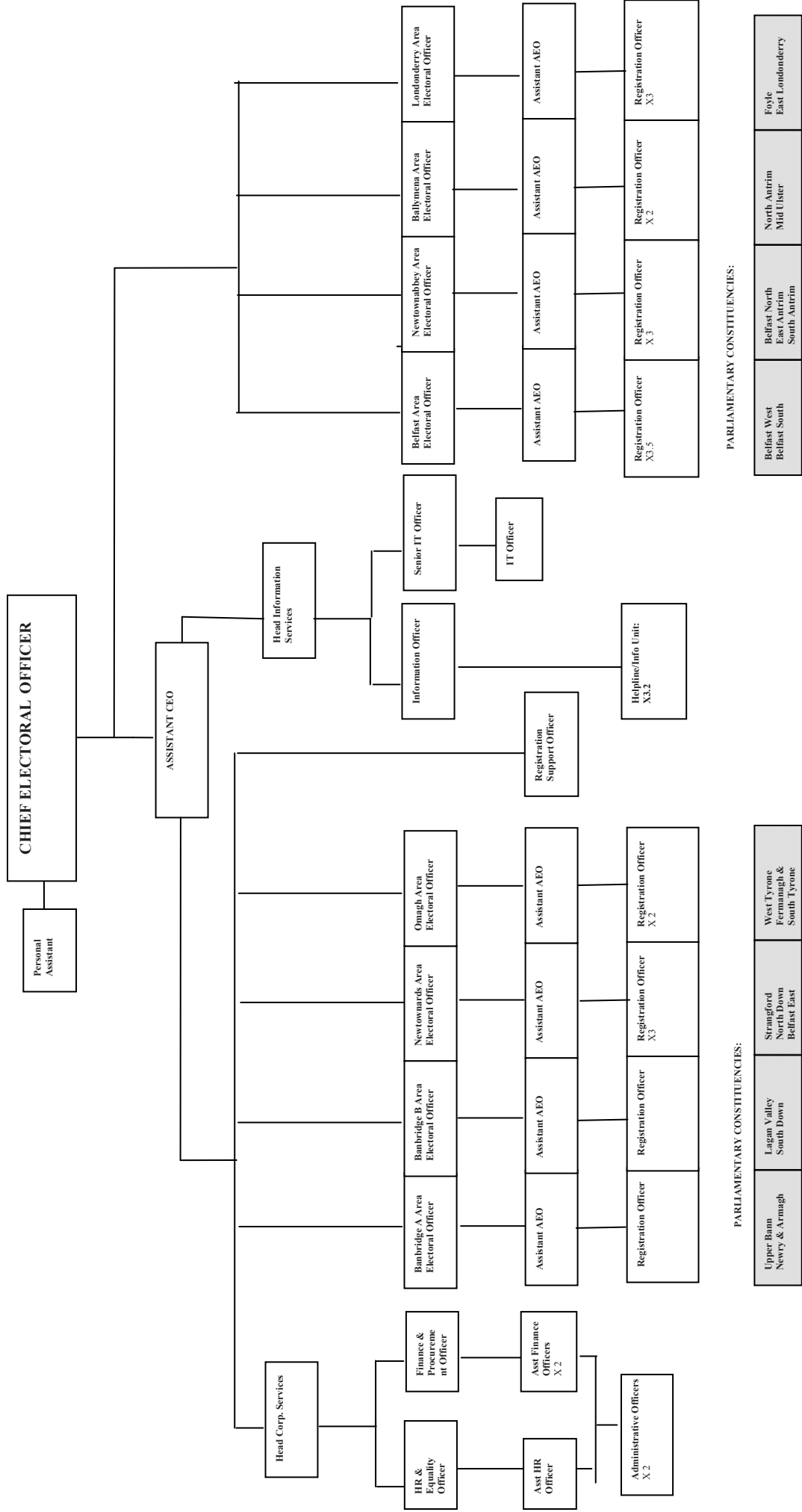
Target:	Status	Comments
3. By 31 March 2013 to have retained the award of Customer Service Excellence.	A	Customer Service Excellence (CSE) awarded for a further year March 2013.
Development Objectives:	Status	Comments
1. During 2012-2013 to continue to implement professional electoral qualifications for staff through EONI's Performance Management Framework.	A	2 staff undertook the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) professional qualifications in 2012-13.
2. By 31 March 2013 to take forward recommendations of the Estate Management Review.	A	Recommendations of Estate Management Review completed and implemented.
Targets:	Status	Comments
4. To operate EONI efficiently, effectively and within budget throughout the year.	A	A number of efficiency measures were implemented. The organisation remained within budget at year end.
5. Throughout the year adhere to agreed procurement policies and ensure deadlines are met.	A	Compliance with procurement policies and deadlines met.
6. To submit an annual report for the year ending 31 March 2012 to the Secretary of State by 30 June 2012.	A	Annual report completed and submitted within defined timescale.
Development Objectives:	Status	Comments
1. By 31 March 2013 to review management financial systems and procedures.	A	Review completed. Ongoing monitoring of accounting systems.
2. By 31 May 2012 to implement the Equality Scheme and complete a programme of work in accordance with the three year action plan.	A	Final version of the Equality Scheme and Action Plan forwarded to the Equality Commission in April 2012.
3. By 31 March 2013 to ensure the Business Continuity and IT Disaster Recovery Plan is tested and reviewed.	A	Full test of plan was conducted in December 2012.

ELECTORAL OFFICE STRUCTURE AS AT 1 APRIL 2012



* Temporary

ELECTORAL OFFICE STRUCTURE AS AT 31 MARCH 2013



OPERATING COSTS

	£k
<u>Basic Pay -</u>	
Permanent Staff	1,219.0
Temporary Staff	35.8
Basic Pay Total	1,254.8
<u>Overtime -</u>	
Permanent Staff	13.6
Overtime Total	13.6
<u>Employers National Insurance -</u>	
Permanent Staff	83.9
Temporary Staff	1.1
Employers National Insurance Total	85.0
Accrued Superannuation Liability Charge	222.9
Total Staff	1,576.3
Power	41.6
Premises (Key holding)	1.1
Maintenance & Minor Works	43.5
Training	25.5
Travel	21.5
Subsistence	1.0
Personnel Costs	0.5
Other Employee Costs	1.7
Hospitality	0.4
Office Services (Printing, Equipment, Hire, Window Cleaning)	74.0
Computers (Software, Hardware, Maintenance, Line Rental etc)	209.8
Professional Services	96.4
Materials (Mainly Stationery Orders)	19.2
Property charges	113.9
Postage	121.2
Telecommunications	27.8
Office Equipment	2.3
Central & Common Services (Cleaning Offices)	11.1
Estate Management	6.5
Insurance (Premises)	4.5
Advertising	6.0
Fees	8.1
Transport Costs	1.5
Advisory Services	9.3

Operating Leases (Rent of Offices & Photocopiers)	209.0
Total Goods & Services	1,057.4
Electoral Identity Card	16.7
Non Cash Costs	164.2
Receipts	(148.3)
TOTAL PROGRAMME	2,666.3
Capital	142.0
GRAND TOTAL	2,808.3



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