Cabinet Office

Maximising Electoral Registration: An evaluation of local activities

Full report

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Acknowledgements

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Ministerial foreword

The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) in England and Wales on 10 June 2014, with Scotland due to follow suit on 19 September 2014, represents the biggest change to electoral registration in almost a hundred years. It makes registering to vote more secure and more convenient, particularly through the introduction of online registration.

It is of paramount importance for our democracy that as many people as possible are engaged in the democratic process and are able to exercise their civic duties in both registering to vote and voting. That is why the Government invested £4.2 million in 2013/14 to find ways of reaching out to groups who feel most distant from the political process and encouraging them to register to vote. A large proportion of this investment was allocated to all Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) in Great Britain. EROs are responsible for ensuring their registers are as complete and accurate as possible. This additional funding was designed to support them with the costs of local activities aimed at fulfilling this duty.

This report focuses on the first phase of this maximising registration funding which was allocated to EROs on a competitive basis to find ways of increasing registration levels among traditionally under registered groups. As the findings demonstrate, Local Authorities carried out a range of activities: from tailoring tried and tested canvassing methods to focus on specific under registered groups or areas, to collaborating with new partners and utilising new mediums to reach out to individuals missing from the register. Their experiences and learning from these activities provide a wealth of evidence which can inform future maximising registration activity.

EROs are best placed to determine what type of activity is likely to be most effective in maximising registration in their local area. They can already draw from existing guidance from the Electoral Commission and the Association of Electoral Administrators to identify and target those currently missing from the register. The findings of this report compliment this existing support.

I strongly encourage all EROs and their staff to consider how they can draw from the lessons learnt on maximising registration, which are set out in this report, and apply them in their local area.

The Minister for the Constitution, September 2014

Executive summary

The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) from June 2014 in England and Wales and September in Scotland will mean people will be required to register to vote individually, replacing the existing outdated system where a 'head of household' submits an application for registration. As part of the transition to IER, the Government is funding and promoting work at a national and local level to maximise rates of electoral registration, particularly among under-registered groups (URGs). These include attainers (16-17 year olds), young people (18-24 year olds), social renters, and private renters. To this end, in July 2013 the Government announced £4.2 million for maximising registration.

Funding during the first stage of maximising registration was awarded to 24 proposals[1] amounting to £385,848.28 being made available to support these activities. The activities proposed by the successful Local Authorities (LAs) fell into three broad categories:

- Those which proposed publicity and communications activity to target URGs, for example radio adverts, posters, and workshops.

- Those which proposed partnership working with third parties such as housing associations, universities, and schools.

- Those which proposed undertaking traditional Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) activity such as additional, intensive and super canvassing to target particular URGs, wards, or non-responding households.

Of the 24 LAs awarded funding, the most popular type of activity was traditional ERO activity with more than half of all bids focused on intensive canvassing (thirteen, 54 per cent). Five LAs proposed to undertake publicity or communications campaigns (21 per cent), including all three of the joint bids, and six intended to pursue partnership work (25 per cent).

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[1] Three of the 24 grants covered multiple LAs following joint bids: London (32 LAs); Manchester (10 LAs); and Cornwall (3 LAs). Only one evaluation has been required for each and so throughout the report these activities will be referred to as single LAs.

In order to evaluate the registration fund and the activities supported by the funding all 24 lead LAs were requested to return to the Cabinet Office evaluation forms designed to capture a range of numerical data and written feedback. The aim was to receive information through which impact and process could be assessed, lessons identified, and suggestions for future maximising registration activity developed. There was a response rate of 92 per cent with 22 of 24 LAs returning evaluation forms.

Impact and cost

- Across sixteen of the 24 LAs there was a total increase of 116,311 names on the electoral register between 1 October 2013 and 17 February/10March 2014[2]. Across eight LAs there was a decrease of 16,317 electors (n=24). In many instances this reflected improvements in accuracy ahead of IER. This resulted in a total net increase of 99,994 electors across the funded authority areas (just under a 1 per cent increase).

- 30,633 new URG registrations related to maximising registration activity were recorded across the authority areas (n=17). These were identified by colour coded and marked registration forms and through the collection of registrations at scheduled events. A further 27,318 new young people were estimated to have registered in two cross-LA projects based on levels of engagement with the activities, amounting to a potential total of 57,591 new URG registrations.

- The average success rate (for all activities taken together), reflecting the number of electors registered from the number of unregistered individuals in the target URG population, was 32 per cent (n=18). This ranged from 3 per cent to an estimate of 85 per cent. The median suggests just under a third of those targeted (30 per cent) were registered through the activities. It should be acknowledged that these figures relate to registrations as a proportion of the outstanding target population. It is therefore not wholly unexpected that this average is not higher given the target populations in many cases meant a large number of individuals needed to be targeted within the relatively short timeframe of the activity and reporting period.

- Completeness of URG registration rates improved on average by nine percentage points (n=18). URGs increased their representation on the electoral register in all cases reporting in the evaluation.

- From the eighteen LAs for which such data is available, intensive canvassing, typically converted 46 per cent of targeted unregistered individuals into new

[2] Scotland and Wales ran a delayed canvass, publishing their electoral registers 10 March 2014. In England the register was published by LAs 17 February 2014.

electors (n=9). Publicity and communications campaigns had an average success rate of 21 per cent (n=5). Partnership activities demonstrated the least success at 13 per cent (n=4).

- On average, the cost per elector targeted was £1.84 (n=20) and cost per new registration (of the target group) directly resulting from the activity was £16.20 (n=19) with a range of £0.90 to £140.06 and a median cost of just over £5.00 (£5.86). This compares to an average expenditure per elector across England, Scotland, and Wales during the annual canvass 2010/11 of £1.12[3]. It is not wholly unexpected that the figures from the evaluation are higher than this average given the barriers to registration URGs often face and their habitual non-response to the annual canvass. Since the last national figures were gathered, inflation is also expected to have led to a rise in the cost of registration.

- Publicity and campaigns activity was the most expensive on average at £30.25 per registration although this figure is skewed by an outlier of £140.06 and affected by two estimated figures. If only the two activities for which actual figures have been reported are averaged, the outlier excluded, publicity campaigns report a cost of just £1.71 per registration making these the most cost-effective (but this is a small sample). Intensive canvassing activity recorded an average cost of £10.87 while partnership working was £11.96 per registration.

- The biggest expense reported was for staff (n=20). A total of £122,300.75 went towards meeting staff costs at an average of £6,115.04. This included employing additional canvassers, extending canvassers' contracts, allocating existing staff to maximising registration work, and appointing dedicated URG or maximising registration co-ordinators. In only one LA were there no additional staff costs incurred. Printing and design also created significant costs for the projects, but these were limited to only some of the activities. Design costs were incurred by seven of the activities, ranging from £150.00 to £5,500.00, while printing amounted to a total of £17,080.20 across sixteen activities, an average of £1,067.51. These included registration forms as well as posters, leaflets, flyers and further paper-based resources.

Lessons learnt

The findings from this evaluation have been used to identify a number of key lessons, presented below, relating to three main types of maximising registration activity. These are suggestions which electoral services teams may wish to consider when looking to increase the number of individuals on the electoral register and maximise registration among URGs.

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[3] Electoral Commission, The (2012) *The Cost of Electoral Administration in Great Britain*. London, The Electoral Commission.
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/152899/The-cost-of-electoral-registration-in-Great-Britain.pdf

Intensive canvassing: LAs and VJBs

Lesson 1: LAs/VJBs could explore the scope for using both national and local data, including previous canvass records, to identify specific non-responding properties to which intensive canvassing activity could be targeted, particularly in areas with high levels of social and private renting. Where possible this process could be used to permit personalised letters and information tailored specifically to the individuals being targeted.

Lesson 2: LAs/VJBs could consider the scope for maximising the number of personal visits to non-responding properties. One option to consider could be employing full-time canvassers to support additional visits during a shortened timeframe.

Lesson 3: LAs/VJBs could provide canvassers with URG and non-responding property specific training on registration issues specific to the group or community being targeted and on dealing with difficult customers.

Lesson 4: LAs/VJBs could consider the scope for offering payment-by-results financial incentives to canvassers as evidence suggests this is an effective way of driving more registrations.

Lesson 5: Council chief executives and the heads of key council departments could support electoral services and their canvassers by writing out to external partners such as property owners and housing associations ahead of any canvass activity. This can be used to inform individuals about their statutory duties, provide reassurance and prepare them for scheduled canvass visits.

Lesson 6: Intensive canvassing could be scheduled throughout the year based on local circumstances, planned events, and the URG being targeted. LAs/VJBs have the local knowledge to best determine when activity should occur either inside or outside the traditional annual canvass period.

Partnership working: LAs and VJBs

Lesson 7: LAs/VJBs pursuing activities aimed at young people, students and attainers could give consideration to partnership working with council youth services which already possess the skills, knowledge and contacts to develop this type of work. This can extend to canvassing and publicity campaigns aimed at young people.

Lesson 8: Before embarking on any maximising registration activity, electoral services teams could try to assess their skills, knowledge and resource gaps and scope out both internal and external partners who may be able to fill these. This could be achieved through an internal skills audit alongside assessments of the target URG.

Lesson 9: Planning of partnership activity might want to allow time for key relationships to develop prior to activity delivery. This includes timing events/activity based on partners' expert knowledge as well as ensuring partners are free within their own work plans to commit time and resources to any activities.

Lesson 10: Where partners are delivering activity on their behalf, LAs/VJBs could consider whether these partners would benefit from training in registration and electoral processes in advance.

Lesson 11: Electoral services teams could benefit from seeking out opportunities to incorporate some degree of partnership working in the design and delivery of any form of maximising registration activity. This can have a longer-term impact and allows them to utilise existing skills, resources and networks within the council and community.

Publicity campaigns: LAs and VJBs

Lesson 12: Publicity campaigns can be wide reaching and adopt a multi-channel approach which utilises a range of digital, social and print media alongside a significant focus on face-to-face outreach. They could still be targeted however, and backed up with smaller-scale tailored interventions.

Lesson 13: LAs/VJBs could think about how publicity campaigns can be developed beyond an initial activity period and to consider how they can be re-used and run alongside traditional canvass activity.

Lesson 14: Where it is important to reach a wide and diverse audience, electoral services teams could explore the scope for working with existing communication channels within the council as a relatively inexpensive way of transmitting messages across individuals in the authority area.

Lesson 15: When planning activities, electoral services could consider working with relevant URGs and partners to design and develop resources, messages and materials. This might involve focus groups, surveys, consultations and/or partnership working and would look to cover issues of tone, content, language and graphics.

Chapter 1
Introduction

The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) from June 2014 in England and Wales and September in Scotland will mean people will be required to register to vote individually, replacing the existing outdated system where a 'head of household' submits an application for registration. As part of the transition to IER, the Government is funding and promoting work at a national and local level to maximise rates of electoral registration. To this end, in July 2013 the Government announced £4.2 million for maximising registration.

A significant proportion of this maximising registration funding has been allocated to Local Authorities (LAs) and Valuation Joint Boards (VJBs). Electoral Registration Officers (EROs) have a statutory duty to ensure that their electoral registers are as complete and accurate as possible. This funding was designed to support them in fulfilling this duty.

This report presents an evaluation of the first examples of maximising registration activity supported by the Government in the lead up to the launch of IER. These examples stemmed from the Registration Fund, announced in July 2013 – part of the £4.2 million – which invited proposals from LAs and VJBs wishing to undertake and pilot activity to increase registration rates of under-registered groups (URGs) in their local area. The evaluation presented here assesses both the impact and process of the funded LAs' interventions, considering which activities were most successful and among which groups, and how cost-effective these were. It also presents examples of good practice and lessons learnt to support a number of suggestions for developing future strategies aimed at improving registration rates, particularly among URGs.

Chapter 2
Background

The move to IER has the potential to generate a large amount of interest, as well as an easier means to register to vote. It is therefore an opportunity to focus on promoting registration and democratic engagement as part of the transition. Alongside this, research carried out by the Electoral Commission provides the best available estimate of electoral registration and shows that as of February/March 2014 the register was 85 per cent complete, equating to approximately 7.5 million eligible electors missing from the register irrespective of the transition to IER[1]. There are also suggestions that there has been an overall decline in registration, particularly from the early 1990s onwards[2]. If this trend continues it will pose an increasing threat to register completeness and equal access to electoral participation. This emphasises the need for maximising registration activity to ensure everyone in the country is signed up to the electoral register and has their chance to vote.

Lessons have also been learnt from Northern Ireland's transition to IER in 2002. Following its introduction, between August 2002 and December 2002 there was a fall in Northern Ireland's registered electors of 10 per cent[3]. While this could be explained by the improved accuracy of the register (duplicate entries, for example, removed) it has also been related, in part, to some electors being reluctant to register individually or provide personal identifiers, or simply being unaware of how IER operates and the changes which were being made. These have been identified as concerns and potential issues for the UK-wide introduction of IER among some URGs[4]. Equally, with emphasis moving away from households to individuals, there will be some

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[1] Electoral Commission, The (2014) *The Quality of the 2014 Electoral Registers in Great Britain.* London, The Electoral Commission. http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-research/electoral-registration-research

[2] Wilks-Heeg, S (2012) *Electoral registration in the United Kingdom: A literature review for the Cabinet Office Electoral Registration Transformation Programme.* London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78883/IER_Literature_review_Feb_2012.pdf

[3] Ibid

[4] GfK NOP (2012) *Under-registered groups & individual electoral registration.* London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/under-registered-groups-and-individual-electoral-registration

currently registered electors who may have never had any interaction with electoral registration procedures.

The Government has therefore developed a number of safeguards aimed at preventing a similar decline in registration. A core component will be the use of data matching to confirm the majority of electors on the register. Existing electors will have their records matched with other public databases. Any elector whose records match will be confirmed and automatically re-registered under IER. This will significantly minimise any decline in registrations which could occur.

A dry run of this confirmation process in the summer of 2013 suggested that while the majority of registered electors are likely to confirm, 22 per cent of electors are unlikely to be confirmed[5]. This average fell to 15 per cent where data matching was extended by LAs and VJBs to use local data sources. A write-out and annual canvass in autumn/winter 2014 will follow the introduction of IER and the Electoral Commission will be running simultaneous public awareness campaigns. These will encourage as many unconfirmed electors as possible to re-register under the new system.

The transition to IER is also being phased over two years, with a carry-forward allowing those not individually registered by the time of the 2015 General Election to vote in that election to ensure the completeness of the register. While this means that unconfirmed electors will remain on the register and be able to vote in the 2015 General Election, it is important to ensure that they re-register under IER before these transitional arrangements come to an end.

Northern Ireland's experience suggests that in the transition to IER there must be additional support, reassurance, and encouragement for individuals and groups, both those currently registered and unregistered, to provide them with the knowledge, motivation, and ability to complete the registration process[6]. The maximising registration activity is designed both to meet these challenges and alongside the safeguards outlined above, ensure the completeness and accuracy of the register is both protected and improved as part of the transition to IER.

2.1. Under-registered groups

Research has identified a number of specific elector types in which individuals are more likely to be both unregistered now and/or less likely to be confirmed. Previously, Electoral Commission research has highlighted seven groups where rates of registration fall below that of the average rate of the UK: private renters; social

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[5] Cabinet Office, The (2013) *Simplifying the transition to Individual Electoral Registration: full report*. London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electoral-registration-factors-in-england-and-wales

[6] GfK NOP (2012) *Under-registered groups & individual electoral registration*. London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/under-registered-groups-and-individual-electoral-registration

renters; BME groups; young people (17-18 years); young people (19-24 years); EU nationals; and Irish and Commonwealth citizens (Table 2.1). Additional research by the Commission has suggested as many as 22 per cent of students will not be registered to vote, giving them a registration rate similar to that of social renters[7].

Building on this the Cabinet Office conducted regression analysis to isolate those factors which have a significant impact on registration rates in England and Wales[8]. For example, are young people less likely to be registered because they are young or due to their higher likelihood of living in rented accommodation? A range of local authority demographic and economic characteristics[9] were tested against a dependent variable of local registration rates[10]. The aim was to determine among which groups maximising registration activity might be of most benefit. Lower rates of registration were found to be significantly associated with higher levels of: private renting; social renting; residents born outside of the UK; and 18-24 year olds and students.

Table 2.1: Under-registered groups and register completeness

Under-registered group	Register completeness
Social renters*	78%
BME groups**	77%
Irish and Commonwealth national	68%
Private renters	56%
Young people (19-24 years)	56%
EU nationals	56%
Young people (17-18 years)	55%

Source: Electoral Commission, The (2011) *Great Britain's Electoral Registers 2011*. London, The Electoral Commission. *http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-research/electoral-registration-research*
* Renting accommodation from councils or housing associations
** The Electoral Commission's Winter Tracker 2012 found no significant difference between BME and white ethnic groups

This information not only helps narrow the types of potential electors for targeting but also starts to inform theories of why there is under-registration among certain groups.

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[7] Electoral Commission, The (2008) *Students urged to find their voice* [Online] http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/i-am-a/journalist/electoral-commission-media-centre/news-releases-campaigns/students-urged-to-find-their-voice? (accessed 25 June 2014)
[8] Cabinet Office, The (2013) *Electoral Registration Analysis*. London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/electoral-registration-factors-in-england-and-wales
[9] Gathered from 2011 UK Census data and ONS mid-year population estimates for England and Wales
[10] Local authority registration rates estimated by dividing the number of electors registered (adults plus attainers) by the number of residents of equivalent ages (from ONS mid-year population estimates, 2011).

For example, private renters might be assumed to be more regular home movers while residents born outside the UK may be unaware of eligibility. In turn, interventions and activities can be designed to affect the likely barriers these electors may be facing.

Further analysis was used to identify groups who are less likely to be confirmed. These are students, people living in communal establishments, and private renters. Conversely, young people (18-24 years), people born outside of the UK, people living in social housing and ethnic minorities were just as likely to be confirmed as their peers. Such findings are notable since they implied that targeting the latter group before IER Go Live may be more advantageous than focusing on those who may not be confirmed under IER and so need to re-register.

2.2. Maximising registration fund

The first stage of delivering maximising registration activity saw funding awarded on a competitive basis to bidding LAs and VJBs. The number of successful applicants was dependent on the strength of individual applications and the demand for funding. Applications were judged on a range of measures including the number of electors being targeted, the number of expected resultant registrations, the perceived level of innovation, cost-effectiveness, and the setting out of clear plans for evaluation. A total of £385,848.28 was allocated through the competitive process to 60 LAs across 24 successful activity proposals, covering areas in England, Scotland and Wales.

All activities of this first phase of activity were designed to run between 1 October 2013 and 17 February 2014 (England) and 10 March 2014 (Scotland and Wales), coinciding with the 2013/14 annual canvass and publishing of the updated electoral register. The annual canvass for 2013/14 was delayed in order to ensure the electoral register was as accurate as possible before commencement of the IER confirmation process.

Particular attention was to be paid to those groups identified by the Cabinet Office's analysis as being under-registered but likely to be confirmed. It was not the intention that groups less likely to be confirmed would receive no attention, or that unregistered individuals in groups of typically higher registration rates should be excluded by any activity. It was suggested however that focusing specifically on groups most likely to be confirmed would be more cost effective ahead of IER; EROs are less likely to have to invite them to re-register after live confirmation. It was nevertheless acknowledged that EROs are best placed to determine which particular groups in their areas would benefit most from targeted maximising registration activity. Similarly, LAs' and VJBs' were free to decide which activities would be best to pursue, given their existing activities, local characteristics and the group(s) being targeted.

Evidently in many cases, even LA and VJB activity tailored towards specific electors has the potential for wider impact. For example, the reach of publicity campaigns cannot always be controlled while individuals targeted by an activity might pass on messages to friends and family beyond the identified target group. It was therefore expected that the reach and impact of the funded activities would extend beyond the specific intervention itself.

Since the allocation of these funds and commencement of activities, an announcement by the Minister of State for Cities and the Constitution on 5 February 2014 provided funding to all EROs in Great Britain for maximising registration, alongside five national organisations[11]. While the objectives for maximising registration remain unchanged, altering the distribution of the funds means that ultimately every LA and VJB will benefit from extra resources to help boost the completeness and accuracy of their register. Allocations were based on levels of under-registration by comparing the size of the register to the 16+ population. An element was based on the number of 16-18 year olds to encourage activity in schools to register attainers. In keeping with the principle of subsidiarity and the recognition that EROs are best placed to determine what local activity can best drive up voter registration among URGs or specific areas of under-registration, the types of maximising registration activity were not mandated but guidance was made available on the Association of Electoral Administrators (AEA) website which LAs/VJBs can draw from[12]. Annex A presents some early examples of phase two activities.

2.3. Evaluation report

This report presents evidence from the 24 LA activities which were successful in being awarded funding during the first stage of maximising registration activity. It assesses the impact and process of the resultant activities in their effectiveness at increasing rates of registration among URGs. Doing so, it starts to address the following:

1   In the first instance, how many registrations were secured from the interventions themselves and as a wider measure the overall difference in the total number of registered electors between 2012/13 and 2013/14.

2   The cost-benefit of offering funding for these activities and the extent to which they offer value for money.

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[11] https://www.gov.uk/government/news/funding-for-new-ways-to-encourage-voter-registration
[12] Cabinet Office, The (2014) *Maximising Registration: Good practice guidance for Local Authorities*. London, The Cabinet Office. http://www.aea-elections.co.uk/downloads/co_guidance_max_registration_funding_310114.pdf

3   The types of activities carried out as a result of the funding including analysis of which were most successful in securing registrations, which were less successful, and which would be suitable for wider roll out and scaling up.

4   What any qualitative feedback from EROs, those directly involved in delivering the activities and targeted electors suggests needs to change if the activities were to be replicated.

The evaluation report also highlights examples of good practice and evidence of success, as well as lessons learnt. This can be used by LAs/VJBs as they now seek to maximise registration in their own areas following the latest allocations of funding, and more widely as they work towards meeting the Electoral Commission's Performance Standards for EROs[13]. A number of lessons are presented throughout the report which EROs might like to consider when planning future maximising registration activities.

The report itself makes a wider contribution to debates on the efficiency and effectiveness of existing registration activity, helping to address the lack of evidence available from recent years to assess the impact of different canvass methods on registration rates[14].

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[13] Electoral Commission, The (2013) *New performance standards for EROs*. London, The Electoral Commission. http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/162588/New-performance-standards-for-EROs-September-2013.pdf

[14] Wilks-Heeg, S (2012) *Electoral registration in the United Kingdom: A literature review for the Cabinet Office Electoral Registration Transformation Programme.* London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78883/IER_Literature_review_Feb_2012.pdf

Chapter 3
Summary of bids

A total of 105 applications for the maximising registration fund were received (a number of these were joint applications encompassing several LA areas). The number of successful applications was dependent on the strength of individual applications and the amount of funding available. Applications were first scored by an assessment panel consisting of a core of three Electoral Registration Transformation Programme (ERTP) staff, plus a relevant policy expert based on the type of activity proposed. Applications were assessed and scored on the extent to which they had:

- A focus on a URG which was likely to be confirmed in 2014
- A feasible delivery plan
- A clear method for assessing the success of the scheme
- A justification of their anticipated costs and an anticipated cost per elector

Applications were then subject to a moderation panel consisting of senior ERTP officials before final approval from the Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform.

Following the selection process above, funding was subsequently awarded to 24 proposals in 2013[1]. This amounted to £385,848.28 being made available to support maximising registration activities. The total number of electors intended to be targeted by the original proposals was 203,978 with the median number targeted standing at 5,470 (an average of 8,499). Across the 24 grants this worked out at on average £1.89 per elector targeted, prospective costs ranging from £0.22 to £5.04.

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[1] Three of the 24 grants covered multiple LAs following joint bids: London (32 LAs); Manchester (10 LAs); and Cornwall (3 LAs). Only one evaluation has been required for each and so throughout the report these activities will be referred to as single LAs/VJBs.

The activities proposed by the successful LAs fell into three broad categories:

- Those which proposed publicity and communications activity to target URGs, for example radio adverts, posters, and workshops.
- Those which proposed partnership working with third parties such as housing associations, universities, and schools.
- Those which proposed undertaking traditional ERO activity such as additional, intensive, and super canvassing to target particular URGs, wards or non-responding households.

Of the 24 LAs awarded funding, the most popular type of activity was intensive canvassing with more than half of all bids focused here (thirteen, 54 per cent). Five LAs proposed to undertake publicity or communications campaigns (21 per cent), including all three of the joint-LA bids, and six intended to pursue partnership work (25 per cent).

The proposed activities intended to target a range of URGs. LAs were free to determine which URGs they would cover based on their own local knowledge, previous canvass experiences, and any relevant and available data. They identified where under-registration was particularly low in their area and among which groups they felt their intervention would have most effect. Social renters, attainers and young people were the most frequently targeted with fourteen, ten and nine of the successful LAs focusing at least some of their activity here respectively (Figure 3.1). This corresponded with those groups found to be most likely to be confirmed under IER.
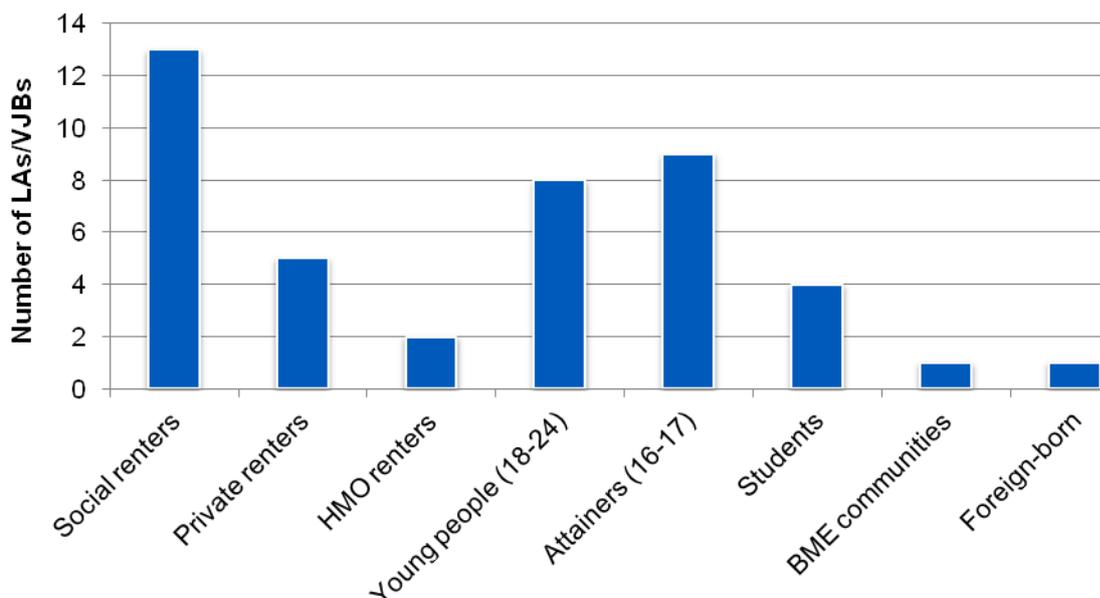

Fig. 3.1: Maximising registration fund phase one target groups

Table 3.1: Number of URGs targeted by successful LA projects

Number of URGs targeted	Number of LAs (proportion in parentheses)
One URG	11 (46%)
Two URGs	7 (29%)
Three URGS	6 (25%)

In many areas, multiple groups were targeted (Table 3.1), sometimes through the same activities and sometimes with specific or tailored interventions *within* the overarching activity. For example, designing different registration forms for different groups within an intensive canvass. In some cases there was also an element of overlap. Students for example were a specific target group for some EROs, particularly in university towns, but in others they may have been reached inadvertently within the arguably broader category of 'young people'. Comparisons between activities based on the target URG should therefore take this into account.

The target groups often appeared to influence the type of activity pursued. Intensive canvassing was particularly popular for targeting social renters (local authorities would know where these properties were and therefore be able to identify the group more easily) while publicity and communications campaigns were more frequently proposed for targeting young people and attainers. Within this EROs also aimed to target particular barriers faced by different URGs in registering to vote. Publicity campaigns were therefore also often chosen for young people, particularly attainers, for their awareness raising potential. This builds on research which has suggested young people often lack knowledge and understanding of registration processes and eligibility[2]. Partnerships with housing networks was in contrast sought to tackle the challenge of frequent home movement of social and private renters.

3.1. ERO Performance Standards

The Electoral Commission monitors the performance of EROs annually against ten performance standards to ensure increasingly high standards of electoral administration. Within these, three relate closely to the maximising registration fund through their contribution to the improving the completeness and accuracy of electoral registers.[3] These performance levels provide additional context when assessing the impact not only of the funded activities on registration levels but the

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[2] GfK NOP (2012) *Under-registered groups & individual electoral registration.* London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/under-registered-groups-and-individual-electoral-registration

[3] Electoral Commission, The (2008) *Performance Standards for Electoral Registration Officers in Great Britain.* London, The Electoral Commission. http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/performance-standards/performance-in-running-electoral-registration

impact of the fund itself in supporting electoral services teams to meet and go above expected standards.

Using the information collected by the Commission for 2013 it is possible to determine the typical level at which the LAs have been performing on these three indicators. During the first phase of maximising registration funding there was a range of high and low performing LAs awarded funding. Performance was broadly in line with the proportion of EROs achieving each level nationally. Six of the LAs discussed here were ranked as performing 'above' on all three standards[4]. Five were meeting expected performance levels on each standard while the remaining ten LAs demonstrated varying levels of success across the measures. On each measure specifically, 76 per cent were above standard on performance standard one, use of data sources. This was the same proportion nationally. On performance standard two, maintaining the property database, 43 per cent and 57 per cent of the sample were above and meeting the standard, respectively. On performance standard three, house-to-house enquiries, 33 per cent were above standard, 57 per cent meeting it, and ten per cent below standard.

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[4] N=21 (does not include the three multiple-LA activities where performance varied across constituent LAs); *Source: Electoral Commission, The (2014)* View performance of local authorities *[Online]* *http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/performance-standards/performance-in-running-elections-and-referendums/view-performance-of-local-authorities* *(accessed 25 June 2014)*

Chapter 4
Methodology

In order to evaluate the registration fund and the activities supported by the funding all 24 LAs were requested to return to the Cabinet Office evaluation forms designed to capture a range of numerical data and written feedback. The aim was to receive information through which impact and process could be assessed. There was a response rate of 92 per cent with 22 of 24 LAs returning evaluation forms. The type of data and feedback within this was varied – not all aspects of the evaluation were necessarily relevant to all activities while impact was often harder to quantify for publicity activity versus targeted canvasses. Some LAs extended activity beyond the original period and as a result only interim results were available at the time of writing. It has nevertheless been possible to analyse the responses and figures so that the experiences of every LA contribute to this report. Completed written feedback was received from 21 of the responding LAs. There are some issues with missing data in the quantitative evaluations, not least due to the accepted difficulties in estimating completeness and accuracy, particularly among URGs[1]. Sample sizes are referenced throughout the report.

With this relatively small sample of LAs, the 24 projects covering over 60 of the UK's 380 LAs, a word of caution must be issued. The findings in this report reflect the views of only a minority of LAs and cannot be used to generalise the impact that the maximising registration activities could experience elsewhere. This fact is even more apparent given the three multiple-LA projects were led by a single LA with only this lead authority reporting in the evaluation. Equally, the LAs do not form a random sample. There may be socio-demographic and economic characteristics which have affected the differences in outcomes reported here and could also mean variation should the activities be rolled out across more LAs and VJBs. Furthermore, there is the possibility of some selection bias given all the LAs featured here were proactive in bidding for maximising registration funding. This suggests they may have more resources and time available for such activity.

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[1] Wilks-Heeg, S (2012) *Electoral registration in the United Kingdom: A literature review for the Cabinet Office Electoral Registration Transformation Programme.* London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78883/IER_Literature_review_Feb_2012.pdf

The evaluation feedback nevertheless provides an indication of what activities might work and among which group. It supports the identification of key lessons which LAs and VJBs might like to consider and where implemented tested further. LAs and VJBs will be best placed, based on their local knowledge and expertise, to determine if and how these suggestions can be incorporated into their existing registration activities.

Numerical data focused on assessing impact. LAs were required to provide details on the total number of registered individuals as recorded on the Electoral Register at the start of the annual canvass (1 October 2013) and end (17 February 2014 in England, 10 March 2014 in Scotland and Wales). While accepting that these figures would not necessarily reflect the impact of activities which would be much more targeted, this was to contextualise the activities across the 24 areas. Alongside this, LAs were to provide details on the number of individuals whose registration was secured through the specific registration activity, the number of electors targeted (by ward, by URG or both) and the number registered in these areas/groups following the targeted intervention.

A range of methods were used by the LAs to measure how many new registration forms were the result of their intervention(s) and not the result of other factors. This was to mitigate the possibility that a registration form might either be returned by someone already likely to register or alternatively someone not engaged by the activity, perhaps responding to the normal annual canvass. Examples included: using colour-coded or marked registration forms exclusively for the funded activities; keeping returned forms separate to those received through the wider annual canvass; recording duplicates where forms were returned from already registered individuals; or using websites linked solely to the activities to collect data which could then populate registration forms for electors to sign and return.

Some LAs also reported using control areas to replicate social experiments, materials being sent to one ward and yet not to a different but demographically similar ward, to measure the value added by the intervention. It was not possible to replicate this method across the LAs whereby their URG performance might be evaluated here against those LAs and VJBs which were not awarded funding under phase one. URG specific data is not always routinely or uniformly collected and to obtain equivalent and standardised information for the period without placing a considerable burden on EROs was not feasible. This evaluation subsequently focuses primarily on sharing practice and assessing the potential of activities which could be tested again in the future. Where LAs or groups of LAs are in a position to roll out similar schemes in the future, they may wish to consider shaping their approach to include a control group to measure impact.

Where registrations as a direct result of activity were difficult to isolate, for instance in cases of publicity campaigns, proxy and alternative measurements were often employed. Modelling has been used to approximate the likely number of new

registrations based on levels of engagement and existing registration rate data. This includes using the Electoral Commission's rates of under-registration and information provided by LAs on activity reach, for example unique website visits, radio advert listenership figures and social media analytics. For more detail on these calculations, see Annex B.

A comprehensive break down of costs was requested, the intention being to determine where savings had been made from the initial proposals, where additional funding was possibly needed in future and where the majority of funding went (e.g. on staff, on materials). Costs per targeted elector and cost per new registration were also calculable from this data permitting analysis of whether activities could be considered value for money.

In contrast, written feedback concentrated on process evaluation and sought LAs' overall assessments of the activities they ran. Among other things this included how the activity went, what elements were most successful, where things went wrong and what lessons were learnt from this and how those involved (both for those delivering and receiving the activities) found them. LAs were provided with a series of questions around which to structure written answers within a set template.

Chapter 5
Impact and costs

The impact of the funded activities was principally assessed through the collection of numerical data relating to the registration rates of LAs, the numbers of electors targeted by the activities and the numbers of new registrations following this.

5.1. Total registrations

Sixteen of the 24 LAs saw an increase in total registrations. This resulted in a total increase of 116,311 registrations between 1 October 2013 and 17 February/10 March 2014[1].

Eight saw a fall in total registration rate, amounting to 16,317 individuals being removed from the electoral register. In many instances, these LAs were urban areas with high levels of residential mobility (for example, Lambeth and Westminster) and so reported experiencing regular fluctuations in the register irrespective of maximising registration activity. Equally, other LAs were able to increase the accuracy of their register prior to the introduction of IER. Cornwall, for example, removed approximately 10,000 ineligible or duplicate entries and home movers from their register during the 2013/14 annual canvass[2].

Across the 24 LAs, the result is a net increase of 99,994 electors on the register. From an original total of 11,736,178 this marks an increase of approximately 1 per cent to the whole register. In these areas, given the targeted focus of maximising registration activities, we would expect a greater proportion of these new electors to be from URGs.

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[1] Figures for Harborough, Medway and Southend-on-Sea obtained via the Electoral Commission and cover the period 1 November 2013 to 17 February 2014.
[2] Where these figures were provided, as in the case of Cornwall, they have been taken from the original register figure to calculate net scores (see Annex B)

5.2. New URG registrations

All LAs which have returned full evaluations experienced new registrations among their target groups (n=17). The result was 30,633 new URG registrations. This was an average of 1,802 new URG electors per LA and median of 1,054. In addition, two LAs leading publicity and communications campaigns where they have been unable to provide exact registration figures are estimated to have potentially secured a further 27,318 registrations from young people (Cornwall and Greater Manchester). (This figure is based on modelling techniques which use figures provided by the LAs to capture reach and engagement – e.g. website visits, social media interactions – and the Electoral Commissions estimates of youth registration rates[3].) For the seventeen LAs for which there is data this generates an approximate total of 57,591 new URG registrations during the activity period.

Where data is available on how many individuals were targeted, including those where registrations have been estimated, the average success rate – number of registrations as a percentage of those targeted – was 32 per cent (n=18). This ranged from 3 per cent in Greater London (a pan-London publicity campaign which may have had additional reach and impact beyond the registrations recorded, including potential registrations resulting from over 17,200 website hits) to an estimate of 85 per cent in Lambeth. The median rate was 30 per cent.
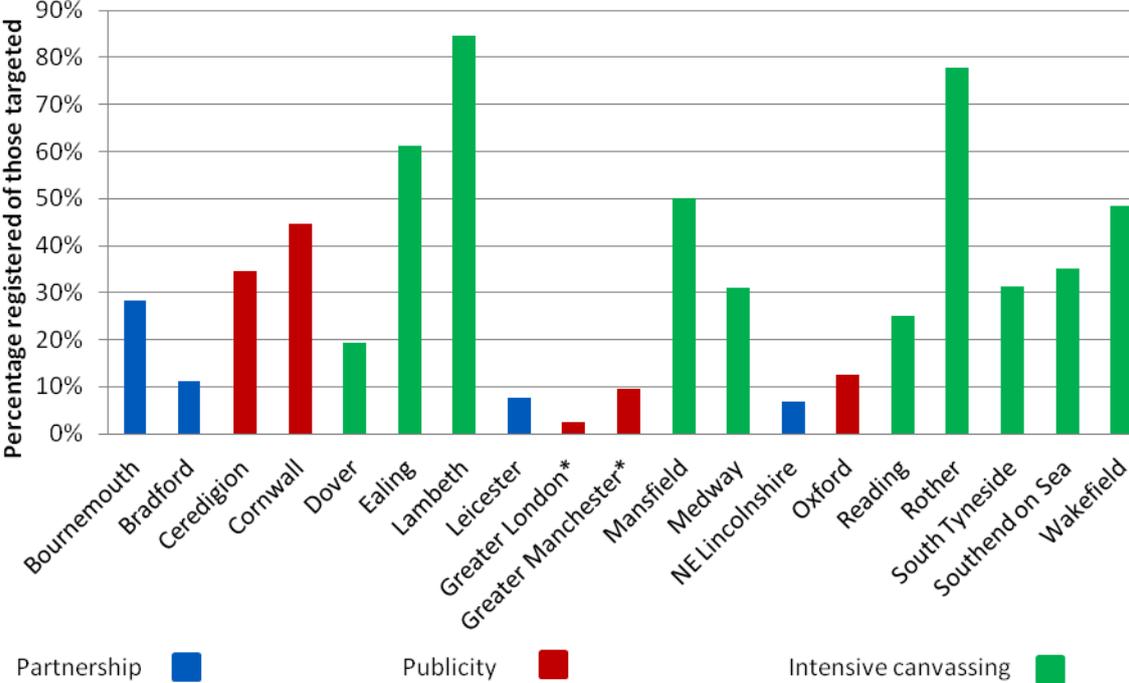

Fig. 5.1: Target URG registration success rates (percentage of those targeted registering as result of activity), *Success of multiple-LA activity

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[3] See Annex B

It should be acknowledged that these figures relate to registrations as a proportion of the outstanding target population. It is therefore not wholly unexpected that the average is not higher given the target populations in many cases meant a large number of individuals needed to be targeted within the relatively short timeframe of the activity and reporting period. On an alternative success indicator the activities resulted in improvement to the completeness of the target URG register in each local area by, on average, approximately 9 percentage points (n=18). Therefore in all cases reporting evaluation figures, URG representation on the register increased.

Of the three activity types intensive canvassing appears to have been the most successful in securing new registrations among the URGs through the targeted activity (Figure 5.1). From the eighteen LAs for which such data is available, intensive canvassing, typically converted 46 per cent of targeted unregistered individuals into new electors (depicted in green). In addition to the results presented in Figure 5.1, further evidence of success can be found in data received from another canvassing LA. At the time of publication data was available relating to only one of its target groups (students) but even here a success rate of 55 per cent was achieved (Glasgow). Publicity and communications campaigns (red) had an average success rate of 21 per cent.

Partnership activities demonstrated the least success at just 13 per cent. However, written feedback still suggests merits in this approach and it will be important to consider how registration rates might be improved while not losing the positive aspects of partnership activity. Moreover, in the example of one partnership LA (Leicester) a further 1,442 registrations were achieved from young people who were unaware of their being on the register already. Similarly in Bradford a further 816 registrations were recorded for individuals already registered. While these were not new registrations this presents more evidence of the activity's success in encouraging individuals to register. The subsequent lessons may prove to be especially important under IER when young people will no longer be registered by their parents, for example.

We are also aware of some LAs experiencing additional new registrations related to their activities following the end of the activity period and publishing of the electoral register. In Dover, for example, a further 371 electors have registered through the marked forms following the register's publication. This would increase their overall success rate by a further eight percentage points. In turn it demonstrates the longer-term potential of these activities. We would expect more registrations across all funded LAs to have been secured beyond the evaluation reporting deadline.

5.3. Costs

Just under half of all LAs returning cost information spent more than the money allocated (ten LAs, n=22). Written feedback suggests this was the result of multiple factors. In some cases unforeseen circumstances led to changes which created new costs. Ceredigion was badly affected by the winter storms with many students, the

target group, being relocated out of their student accommodation. This meant additional canvassing efforts were required. In contrast, other LAs actively sought to increase the budget using their own funds to extend and widen their activities. Dover, for example, decided to extend the reach of its canvassing activities beyond its initial target of private and social renters to include all non-responding households given the potential positive impact ahead of IER. This necessarily increased the costs of the activity.

Some LAs also reported the reality that an increase in costs is often a direct consequence of a successful initiative. For instance, where canvassers received financial incentives per registration form completed (Ealing). Similarly, cost savings in some areas reflected lower than hoped for success rates, postage costs for example reduced where fewer forms were returned (Mansfield).

The average over-spend across the ten was £3,708.79. There was a range of £99.00 in Greater Manchester to £31,500.00 in Glasgow[4], with a median of £443.50 indicating that in most cases the level of over-spend was relatively small and towards the lower end of the range. Ceredigion is one LA which has stated its intention to meet the shortfall (£688.63) with money from the second phase of maximising registration funding. Equally Gateshead's delayed activity will be making use of phase two funding to strengthen the initiative further.
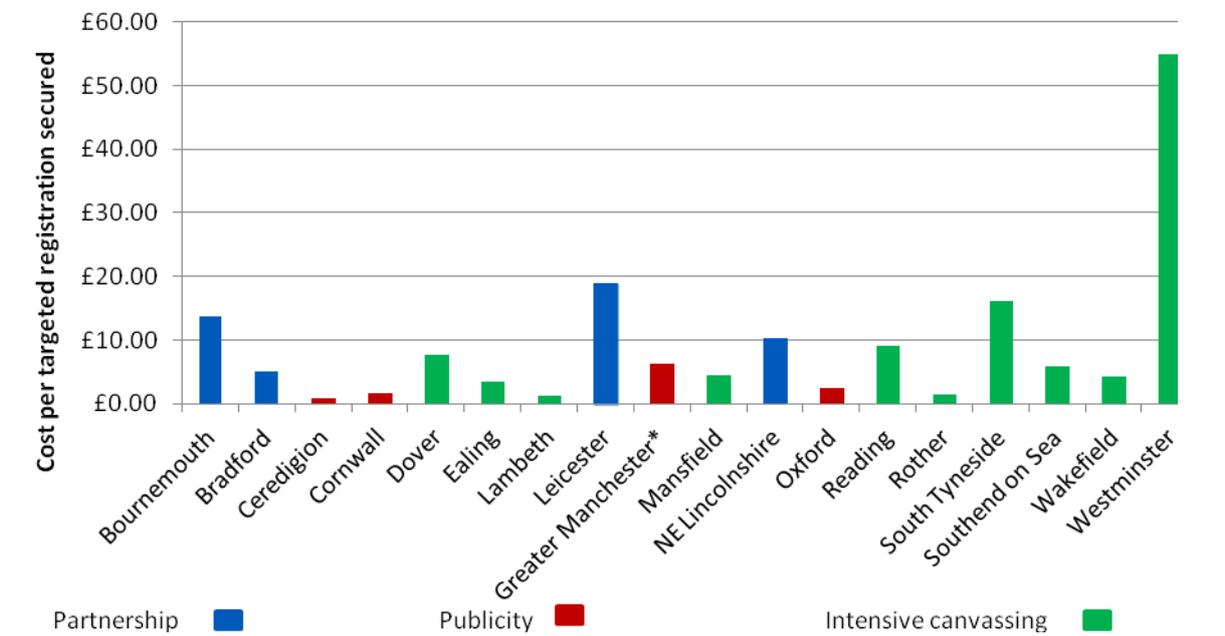
Fig. 5.2: Cost per targeted registration secured, *Cost of multiple-LA activity

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[4] Glasgow City Council was awarded £15,000 to deliver maximising registration activity in phase one. At his discretion, the ERO drew from existing council resources to increase the scope of activity delivered in phase one. Glasgow City Council was awarded a further £12,966 as part of the phase 2 maximising registration funding allocations to all LAs and VJBs in Great Britain. It is unclear, to what extent, the additional activity carried out under phase 1 was funded purely through existing council resources or by also drawing from the phase 2 allocation.

Ten LAs spent less than anticipated and two were on budget. In the case of North East Lincolnshire, less money was spent than anticipated in delivering the proposed activity but surplus funding was used to support additional canvassing work. This itself enabled an additional 1,200 homes to be visited and 371 forms completed

The average under-spend for the ten LAs was £3, with a range of £101.50 to £6,891.00. The median was £3788.72 which suggests the majority were to the lower end of the range. Written feedback suggests cost savings were largely found by negotiating low quotes with printers and suppliers and utilising expertise across the Council instead of having to outsource to external companies. As stated above, a less positive observation was cost savings resulting from fewer returned forms. This implies cost alone is not necessarily an indication of greater success and cost-effectiveness.

The average cost per elector targeted was £1.84 (n=20). The cost per new registration (of the target group) directly resulting from the activity was unexpectedly higher at £16.20 (n=19). There was a range of £0.90 to £140.06 with a median cost of just over £5.00 (£5.86). The highest figure of £140.06 is that of the activity across Greater London which as stated above secured only a relatively small success rate – just 3 per cent of the young people it targeted – but may have had a wider impact in terms of its reach and democratic engagement function. Work is currently being done to model this potential impact.

Figure 5.2 indicates the cost per elector registered by LA, excluding Greater London's figure for ease of viewing. The same colour codes apply as used in Figure 5.1 (blue is partnership working, red is publicity activity, and green is intensive canvassing). As the chart demonstrates, the costs per registration were in the majority of cases less than £10.00. Publicity and campaigns activity was the most expensive on average at £30.25 per registration but as is evident from Figure 5.2, with the exclusion of London's figures it was the most cost-effective at an average of just £2.80 per registration. A note of caution must be employed here since the figures for Cornwall and Manchester are only estimates of new registrations gained through the activity. Nevertheless, if only those two for which actual figures have been reported (and excluding London) are averaged, publicity campaigns still report a cost of just £1.71 per registration. Ceredigion, for example, was as low as £0.90 per registration and both were below £5.00.

Intensive canvassing had an average cost of £10.87. In contrast partnership working was not only less likely to convert a targeted individual into a registered elector it was also the most expensive at £11.96 per registration. As with success rates it is expected that more registrations will have been secured beyond the original activity period. In Dover for instance their longer-term cost per registration, which would include those registering after the evaluation reporting, is just £5.50. This is a reduction of £2.13 from that recorded in Figure 5.2.

Comparable figures on the general cost of registering a new elector in the UK, URG or otherwise, have been previously recorded by the Electoral Commission. The average cost across England, Scotland and Wales per elector during the 2010/11 annual canvass was £1.12[5]. This ranged from £0.90 in a typical unitary authority to £1.64 in a London borough, where the cost of temporary elections staff tends to be higher. However, the higher figures observed in the evaluation presented, to some extent cannot be directly compared with these averages. The figures from the evaluation would be expected to be higher than average given the barriers to registration URGs often face and their habitual non-response to the annual canvass.

5.4. Expenses

It was widely agreed that carrying out maximising registration activity generated a noticeable increase in work; 73 per cent of intensive canvass activities, 80 per cent of partnership activities, and 80 per cent of publicity activities made explicit reference to the creation of additional tasks, training, and staff reallocation needs. Subsequently, the biggest expense reported was for staff (n=20).

A total of £122,300.75 went towards meeting staff costs at an average of £6,115.04 per LA. This included employing additional canvassers, extending canvassers' contracts, allocating existing staff to maximising registration work, supporting community champions and appointing dedicated URG or maximising registration co-ordinators. In only one LA were no additional staff costs incurred.

Printing and design also created significant costs for the projects, but these were limited to only some of the activities. Design costs were incurred by seven of the activities, ranging from £150.00 to £5,500.00, while printing amounted to a total of £17,080.20 across sixteen activities, an average of £1,067.51. These included registration forms as well as posters, leaflets, flyers, and further paper-based resources.

Additional costs throughout the projects covered a wide range of expenses. This included but was not limited to:

- travel expenses
- website creation
- stationery
- translation services
- postage

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[5] Electoral Commission, The (2012) *The Cost of Electoral Administration in Great Britain*. London, The Electoral Commission.
http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/152899/The-cost-of-electoral-registration-in-Great-Britain.pdf

- coloured forms and envelopes
- canvasser training
- additional telephone calls where no direct access to properties
- focus groups
- outsourcing of design and analysis
- stall rental (e.g. freshers' fairs)
- free gifts for outreach activities

Table 5.1: Summary of phase one maximising registration activity

LA	Primary activity	Target group(s)	Funding*	Total spend*	% registered of those targeted	Cost per registration
Bournemouth Borough Council	Partnership	Social renters; HMO residents	£14,613	£10,466	28%	£13.72
City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council	Partnership	Attainers	£6,310	£6,030	11%	£5.06
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council	Partnership	Attainers	£14,809	£12,372	0.33%**	£1,031.00**
Harborough District Council	Partnership	Social renters; private renters	£2,730	****	****	****
Leicester City Council	Partnership	Attainers; young people	£19,917	£19,816	8%	£18.80
North East Lincolnshire Council	Partnership	Social renters	£11,800	£4,948	7%	£10.27
Dover District Council	Intensive canvassing	Social renters; private renters	£6,353	£7,316	19%	£7.36
London Borough of Ealing	Intensive canvassing	Social renters; private renters	£11,914	£11,345	61%	£3.53
Glasgow City Council	Intensive canvassing	Young people; students; BME	£15,000	£46,500	****	****
London Borough of Lambeth	Intensive canvassing	Social renters; private renters; Latin American community	£12,425	£12,581	85%	£1.17
Mansfield District Council	Intensive canvassing	Social renters	£7,013	£6,906	31%	£4.48

Medway Council	Intensive canvassing	Social renters	£1,700	****	****	****
Reading Borough Council	Intensive canvassing	Students	£5,506	£6,890	25%	£9.15
London borough of Richmond upon Thames	Intensive canvassing	Social renters; private renters; students	£8,124	£10,000	****	****
Rother District Council	Intensive canvassing	Social renters	£680	£822	78%	£1.52
South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council	Intensive canvassing	Attainers	£2,285	£2,391	31%	£16.05
Southend on Sea Borough Council	Intensive canvassing	Attainers; young people; social renters	£13,718	£6,827	35%	£5.86
City of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council	Intensive canvassing	Social renters	£7,000	£7,000	48%	£4.34
Westminster City Council	Intensive canvassing	HMO residents	£7,500	£7,699	****	£55.00
Ceredigion County Council	Publicity	Students; young people; attainers	£1746	£2,435	35%	£0.90
Cornwall Council	Publicity	Young people; attainers; social renters	£30,000	£24,860	45%***	£1.58
London-wide publicity bid	Publicity	Young people	£100,700	£100,700	2%	£140.06
Manchester-wide publicity bid	Publicity	Young people	£72,000	£72,099	9%***	£6.21
Oxford City Council	Publicity	Attainers; young people; social renters	£12,005	£5,423	13%	£2.52

* Funding and total spend rounded to nearest pound   ** Activity delayed with majority of activity not yet reported on.

*** Registrations achieved based on approximation using reach and engagement data – see Annex B   **** Data unavailable at time of publication

Chapter 6
Intensive canvassing

Intensive canvassing was undertaken by more than half the phase one funded LAs (thirteen, 54 per cent). At the time of writing it is also what LAs/VJBs receiving funding under phase two of the fund are most likely to be spending their money on based on our discussions with a selection of them. From the figures received to date, intensive canvassing has reported the highest levels of success, on average registering almost half (46 per cent, n=9) of all unregistered individuals in the identified target group(s) for the LA areas at a cost of £10.87 per new registration (n=10).

Intensive canvassing can be largely defined by two key processes. The first is the *targeting of specific wards, groups, and/or individuals known to be under- or unregistered* in the local area through their identification and the provision of tailored communication. This can include personalised letters, the use of more colourful and attractive letters and envelopes and the addition of URG-specific information with the canvass form. The second is the carrying out of *additional canvass activity* as an extension of the statutory requirements of the annual canvass. LAs reported sending further mail outs and increasing the number of face-to-face visits made to non-responding properties.

These two processes frequently worked side by side to complement each other. Attainer canvassing in one project offered an example. It involved sending additional reminders to attainer households but also included A5 colour flyers about attainer registration to accompany these letters. The canvass was therefore both extra to and more targeted than traditional canvassing (South Tyneside).

While the intensive canvassing delivered through this funding was rolled out during the postponed canvass period of October 2013 to February 2014 (March in Scotland), most LAs conducted the traditional canvass work first and then focused on the specific maximising registration activity.

6.1. Target groups

The target URGs varied across the fourteen canvassing initiatives. The experience and local knowledge of EROs and a range of data sources determined where registration activity would be best directed.

Much of the activity focused on social and private renters, nine of the fourteen adopting these in their target groups (64 per cent). Typically this decision reflected electorate information obtained from previous canvasses. Matching data from the electoral register and previous years' returns to local data, notably council tax and housing department data was one way in which under-registration was identified as particularly apparent in the private rental and social housing sectors. Five of the eleven LAs responding with written feedback explicitly referenced this approach in their evaluations (Dover, Ealing, Richmond, Rother and Wakefield). One electoral services team was able to identify 80 per cent of its non-responding properties as either socially or privately rented (Ealing).

An alternative approach assessed the number of individuals in the local area falling the Electoral Commission's under-registered groups. For example, where exact figures were unavailable, LAs could approximate levels of under-registration based on the number of private and/or social renters in a particular ward or area and average rates of registration for these groups. Activity could then be targeted towards those areas where rates of under-registration were likely to be high given the large number of individuals there sharing these demographic characteristics. This approach was used by one of the LAs to target its activity (Lambeth). It has additionally presented a method for assessing the potential of maximising registration activity by estimating, with reference to census data, the base level of URG registration across an entire LA prior to any intervention (see Annex B).

Where social and/or private renters were targeted there was an average registration success rate of 51 per cent (n=7). With just over half of all unregistered social or private renters in an area being likely to register as a result of intensive canvassing it appears to be a good way of targeting these potential electors.

Other groups targeted by intensive canvassing campaigns included residents in houses of multiple occupancy (the focus of two LAs and for one of these, Westminster, the sole focus), attainers (Medway and South Tyneside), students (Reading and Richmond) and a local but sizable Latin American community in one LA (Lambeth). Again, Electoral Commission registration rates alongside local data and intelligence were used to identify these target populations as sizeable groups likely to be under-registered and estimate the actual extent of their under-registration. Across the LAs listed, this included working with community groups, university accommodation services and council education departments, as well as referring to nationally held data.

Where we have data, projects aimed at students and attainers were comparatively less successful. For example, 31 and 25 per cent of attainers (South Tyneside) and students (Reading) respectively registered as a result of intensive canvassing. The implication is that this method may be less well suited for targeting these groups.

6.2. Personalised and tailored communication

Local data matching offered a further, more practical application. It was explicitly used by three LAs to identify specific households and personalise letters beyond traditional occupier-addressed forms. Here council-held data was, for example, combined with information from previous canvasses to identify occupied yet non-responding properties and residents where intensive canvassing was most needed (Dover, Westminster and Richmond). Data collected during the 2013/14 canvass itself was also used by two initiatives to determine where there was no change in status for households. This helped to identify areas where high numbers of properties were unregistered and needed details updated (Lambeth and Mansfield). Both approaches presented opportunities for cost savings. Letters and visits were directed only at those households where non-response was a habitual issue rather than across all members of an URG, some of which may be registered. They also provided the opportunity to connect directly with individuals, thereby minimising the possibility of mail outs being ignored or overlooked.

In other cases information from the education department was used to obtain contact details of attainers (South Tyneside) or from universities to access student email lists (Reading). These were both considered by the respective LAs as good ways to reach their target groups directly outside of the traditional canvass. This highlights the importance of cross-council and partnership working even when partnerships do not form the principal activity for maximising registration. However, the lower rates of success for these groups suggest that even with this kind of information it may still be difficult to target young people as effectively through canvass activity.

Obtaining and analysing data in order to identify and contact specific unregistered individuals in particular can be paramount to effective targeted canvassing. This point was reiterated by three of the canvassing LAs (Dover, Glasgow and Lambeth) which discussed requiring additional support from within the council, such as their business analyst teams, to take full advantage of data matching opportunities.

Where canvassing was not personally targeted – either due to time challenges or data limitations – polling district, area and ward-level canvassing presented an alternative option. Here activities could focus on those geographical locations where a significant number of the target group could be found. This included selecting to visit wards with high levels of deprivation and social renters (Wakefield) or making visits to known student accommodation areas (Reading). Therefore, even if it was not possible to identify specific households, these methods had the potential to reach a large number of unregistered individuals. Both LAs adopting this approach provided

Case study 1: Data matching

Intensive canvassing can benefit from a process of data matching, as demonstrated in one London borough which developed bespoke automated data matching software. An external data matching expert was contracted to develop this to analyse and match data from disparate people and property based systems against the electoral register. To date, this has included use of council tax, parking permit, benefits, garden waste and Freedom Pass data. This permitted identification of potential electors to which maximising registration activity could be targeted but also of data errors and areas where updates were required.

The process was used to overcome difficulties with gated communities, one particularly hard to reach group of dwellings, by enabling letters to be addressed accurately to residents. These were communities and residences where there was increased potential for letters not to reach the intended recipient. It also permitted a large-scale mail merge across non-responding properties in the authority. This was in contrast to the traditional approach of non-personalised letters. In addition, the process was used to identify approximately 2,600 non-responding properties as empty, those where individuals are registered elsewhere, or where residents are not eligible. This assisted the accuracy of the register and afforded the electoral services team and canvassers more time to chase those who were eligible. While data is not available on the number of new registrations in their target URG populations, an increase to the register of 3 per cent between 1 October 2013 and 17 February 2014 could indicate a positive impact on canvass activity.

In addition, the software has subsequently been used to build on the expected confirmation rate for the borough as indicated by the Confirmation Dry Run. Significantly it suggested a further 17,373 electors currently registered should be confirmed under IER. There is therefore dual impact. The same data matching processes being used both to confirm existing electors and invite unregistered individuals to register.

positive assessments of the resultant impact and claim they would consider repeating the activities in the future.

Of note however is the difficulty some LAs reported in obtaining necessary data to target directly and personalise communication to individuals in their target URGs. For example, while focusing primarily on delivering a publicity campaign, one LA sought to supplement this with small-scale canvassing (Ceredigion). While successful in identifying student properties for a 'student drop' they were prevented from obtaining data from their local education department on attainers. This resulted in poll card

invitations being sent not to homes but to schools. Even here they then found some resistance from school leadership to support the scheme. Both canvass reach and personalisation were made more difficult. These findings indicate that while data matching is an important way of identifying potential electors, there may be practical difficulties in reaching them which LAs will need to address.

Nevertheless, the above experience (of Ceredigion) is markedly different from that of another maximising registration project where a very positive working relationship with the local education department was reported (South Tyneside). This suggests variations in the access to data between authorities for the purposes of identifying eligible electors. The introduction of a two-tier data sharing Statutory Instrument (SI) in June 2014 can help address this imbalance. The SI enables data sharing for electoral registration purposes between upper and lower-tier authorities in two-tier areas in England and Wales. It removes the current anomaly which allows EROs in unitary authorities to inspect a wider range of locally-held data, such as lists of school students who are approaching voting age, than their counterparts in two-tier areas. Undoubtedly the lessons which follow in discussions of partnership activities (Chapter 7) provide some suggestions of how data sharing barriers can be overcome to support more targeted intensive canvassing.

There is nonetheless a need for analysis skills where electoral services want to conduct data matching to identify and find missing electors. 56 per cent of the written feedback forms raised this and related issues. Examples included: electoral services teams needing to receive additional training and support from council staff (Dover and Lambeth); reallocation of staff to data analysis tasks (Glasgow); outsourcing data analysis to an external partner with data-matching expertise (Richmond); time consumed by cleaning data (South Tyneside); and problems identifying URGs from available data (Westminster). The responses suggest more support could be offered to electoral services teams to enable them to conduct the analysis themselves. This has the potential to reduce staff time costs and improve in-house skills in the use of data and intelligence. As one respondent explained,

> *'We found that when the team was able to use the skills ourselves we could take more advantage of it – it also allowed us to trust the results more, which will be important during IER when we will need to make determinations' (Lambeth)*.

Ministerial Guidance on Individual Electoral Registration (IER) was published 30 September 2013 as part of the Electoral Commission's Guidance on Electoral Registration for EROs[1]. This included guidance on sourcing and using local data to support both the confirmation of existing electors and registration of missing electors. The Cabinet Office will seek to ensure all LAs and VJBs are made aware of this and consider ways in which this can be developed to support EROs further

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[1] Available at: http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/guidance/resources-for-electoral-administrators/electoral-registration

6.3. Additional visits

In most instances, intensive canvassing was designed to permit further visits to properties. As one LA stated, *'our proposed action was to canvass each property as many times as the canvasser was able'* (Rother). Benefit was seen from canvassers being given enough time to visit non-responding properties on multiple occasions in addition to those of the annual canvass. One LA reported that individuals in URGs were often not at home when canvassing was taking place, particular challenges being presented by individuals who work two jobs for example (Mansfield). Thus a single visit and limited timeframe for canvass activity could have failed to reach adequately all target electors. Moreover, URGs and non-responding properties were often found to require more time to be spent on them because they were habitual in their lack of registration. URGs are also less likely to be engaged in politics and more likely to be wary of their greater involvement[2].

> *'[…] persons from hard to reach groups were often unwilling to engage in conversation with our HMO canvassers and to pass on the required information – there was a marked difference between the canvassing of HMOs and other non-HMP properties in terms of the person's doorstop willingness to engage […]' (Westminster)*

> *'In […] (traditionally the lowest registered ward) we faced issues of disengagement, hostility to canvassers (and council in general) and widespread apathy. Despite that we still got a record response for the ward […]' (Lambeth)*

To support additional visits, delivery of the activities typically involved either extending the door-knocking period (for example, Lambeth and Ealing) and/or employing additional full-time canvassers able to dedicate more time to the activity (for example, Mansfield). In one LA the initiative ensured enough time was given to canvassers to make at least three visits to each non-responding property, two more than the statutory requirement (Ealing). The result was an unexpected response rate of 60 per cent which was double that which they had anticipated. In another only one additional visit was supported by the funded project and yet this increased canvass activity still resulted in approximately 78 per cent of targeted individuals registering (Rother).

> *'The extra door-knocking period and reminder form was extremely useful in the wards with traditionally the lowest registration rates.' (Lambeth)*

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[2] GfK NOP (2012) *Under-registered groups & individual electoral registration*. London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/under-registered-groups-and-individual-electoral-registration

Allowing additional time to target URGs and ensuring sufficient canvasser numbers therefore appear to be of critical importance in securing positive outcomes from intensive canvassing. It was in the three authority areas where there was an extended period of canvassing that success rates were highest. Leading on from the quote above, the LA was extremely positive about running an extended canvass period because it saw it achieve a record response rate of 94 per cent for the authority.

6.4. Canvassers

The variability of canvassers was cited in the feedback as one particular challenge to effective intensive canvassing. One LA found that not all canvassers were as thorough as others (South Tyneside) while another found it difficult to recruit suitable canvassers, particularly those from a housing officer background who would possess relevant skills and experience (Lambeth). It was also noted that problems could emerge in recruiting canvassers to work in more deprived areas (Wakefield). This appeared to be due to perceptions of deprived areas being harder to canvass, less attractive to visit and potentially located further from canvassers' own local areas so requiring more travel. Nevertheless, there were also positive reports suggesting many canvassers played an important role in contributing to the activities' successes.

> '[It] was interesting how resourceful some of our HMO canvassers were.' (Westminster)

> '[…] some of our best and most diehard canvassers, some of which employ patient stake-out tactics in order to achieve contact.' (Ealing)

As one LA discussed, what is perhaps crucial in ensuring high quality canvassing, as with any job, is sufficient time being given to assessing and assigning canvassers according to strengths, experience and location (Ealing).

To encourage more and better canvassers, two principal approaches were adopted by the eleven LAs/VJBs reporting here. The first involved the provision of additional training, briefings and supervision to canvassers employed for the purpose of registering URGs and non-responding properties. Additional training was reported as being provided in three of the projects (Mansfield, Wakefield and Westminster). Training covered issues such as dealing with difficult customers, understanding electoral legislation and learning more about registration processes for specific URGs, for example HMO residents.

> 'The canvassers needed to be more proactive than in the traditional form of canvassing and have a more detailed knowledge of the legislation and the factors underpinning why certain processes are being used.' (Westminster)

A further LA (Reading) suggested that in future it would also consider providing additional training to canvassers. In this case training would be provided for student-specific canvassers with emphasis on student issues such as their ability to register at both home and term-time addresses.

In some instances additional training was not felt to be required however. It was not reported as occurring in eight cases. In one it was however found that by carrying out intensive canvassing after the normal canvass period the canvassers were already trained through their worked experience (Ealing). This proved to be one of the most successful intensive canvasses (61 per cent). In such a model there is also an incentive for canvassers to excel in order to be considered for further work during the intensive canvassing period. It could potentially therefore improve the quality of the annual canvass also.

A second approach was to offer financial incentives to canvassers based on the number of target properties canvassed and registrations secured. This was adopted by the three most successful canvassing-based activities (Ealing, Lambeth and Rother), an average success rate of 75 per cent. A further LA would for example also consider including an incentive for canvassers in future years, funding permitting, based on the number of attainers successfully added to the register (South Tyneside).

> *'Canvassing is always hard, but extra financial incentives do make a difference for most canvassers.' (Lambeth)*

Interestingly however, a risk associated with this approach is that the costs of the activity necessarily increase with success; the more registrations secured, the more funding is needed to meet canvasser costs. These are in addition to those already incurred from sending additional mail outs and making more visits. While there is no doubt that an increase in registrations is a good thing, issues of cost may raise concerns for some electoral services teams. As one LA stated:

> *'Interestingly had we done any better […] then there would have been a possibility of an overspend.' (Ealing)*

The costs associated with canvassing can also become particularly high where target properties are dispersed across the authority area. Westminster found this to be an issue with its HMO canvass, additional costs being incurred for travel expenses. This might therefore be a less feasible approach in more rural areas where the population can be highly dispersed. The focus on HMO properties meant canvassers had a larger geographical area to cover than if a ward-based approach had been adopted. This is not to say a ward-based approach should always be favoured. In the case of HMO properties it might be inappropriate given they do not tend to be found in one

location. Focusing on single wards might therefore exclude a large number of potential electors from the canvass. Nevertheless, where possible, grouping canvass properties by smaller geographical areas may be more cost effective. It may also be better for canvassers.

6.5. Access to electors

Challenges were also faced by canvassers when making visits to URG areas and non-responding properties. That is, there were not only obstacles sometimes encountered in matching properties to individuals. There were even problems reaching individuals once properties had been identified. Issues reported included gaining access to buildings, for example in blocks of flats where there are door-entry barriers (Mansfield) or in HMO properties where a single doorbell services all rooms and building residents (Richmond). Where potential electors were living in HMOs there were also difficulties in obtaining the support of those in authority or the property owners (such as care home managers and housing associations) for canvassers to enter and make face-to-face visits (Lambeth and Westminster). This was perhaps due to concern over what the process might involve and how demanding it might be, as well as confusion over any legal requirements.

One suggestion for overcoming these barriers included more support from the Cabinet Office and Electoral Commission to communicate with bodies, such as housing associations and private landlords, and emphasise their statutory duty to support canvassing activity (Bournemouth –partnership activity with canvassing). As with data sharing, at a local level it was felt that communication from those in authority in the LA, for example a chief executive, to property owners or managers and private landlords could aid entry to buildings (Westminster). It would be preferable to arrange this ahead of canvassers visiting so as to prepare the way for them. The alternative of waiting until opposition is encountered to arrange their involvement could risk possible delay.

Beyond the council, external partners, such as housing associations and private landlords were also reported as being at times uncooperative in providing details of residents which could permit a more targeted and personalised canvass (for example, Lambeth and Dover, and to some extent in Bournemouth). This could be mitigated by working with internal partners and using other council data sources such as housing benefit data (Lambeth). However, it was reported as time consuming for these LAs to access this information. This suggests that, in order to overcome these barriers, LAs, VJBs, the Electoral Commission and Cabinet Office should work together to find ways of ensuring external partners are fulfilling their legal obligations and providing the necessary information on their residents to EROs.

6.6. Timing

Further issues reported by LAs which may have affected their registration rates related primarily to local and/or unforeseen circumstances. In one a local by-election interrupted canvass activity in one ward where significant activity had been planned (Lambeth), although this did not appear to negatively affect their overall success rate. The 'student drop' canvass element of Ceredigion's wider publicity campaign was hampered by the relocation of some students due to severe winter storms. In a further case, publicity activity intended to support the canvass had to be re-thought following the delayed publication of the chosen newsletter (Mansfield). These examples demonstrate the need for flexibility and the ability to delay intensive canvass activity when such events occur. This is an important lesson for EROs but also the Cabinet Office as it looks to support maximising registration in the future. Strict, short delivery timetables may not always be appropriate.

It is arguably not imperative that intensive canvassing is scheduled alongside the annual canvass. It may alternatively be that some groups are better targeted at particular points in the year, for example students in September when they have recently moved to new properties and are in the process of enrolling and registering for a range of services (Reading). In many cases it may be advantageous to think about running such activity at different points throughout the year. This might include after the annual canvass following the identification of non-responding properties.

> *'The timetable for certain activities in the scheme did not match other parts of the canvass, so at times it was a struggle to manage both processes side-by-side. (Lambeth)*

6.7. Lessons

For the most part, LAs felt that intensive canvassing was a beneficial activity even if it increased the workload of electoral services. It was seen as a positive addition to the LA-wide annual canvass and a good way of raising registration rates among individuals traditionally and historically absent from the register.

> *'The main lesson learned is that these difficult areas, which have traditionally had a low return, are not impossible to canvass. […] This kind of work is certainly seen as a way forward with IER to ensure that as many electors as possible are registered in the difficult to canvass areas.' (Wakefield)*

> *'The scheme overall was a success and we will be looking to secure resources locally to repeat the exercise at a future canvass. […] We believe that without this scheme significant numbers of these harder to reach groups would simply not be registered.' (Ealing)*

In one, a record canvass response rate was reported as being achieved (Lambeth). In another the response rate of 98% for the ward areas targeted– targeted because of their typically low response rate – was four percentage points higher than that achieved on average across the LA (Wakefield). These experiences imply co-ordinated intensive canvassing through both targeted and additional activity can therefore have an encouraging impact on URG registration rates.

Only one LA (Mansfield) felt that the additional registrations gained did not wholly outweigh the time spent organising and conducting the additional canvassing in their area. Even here however, the LA would recommend applying intensive canvassing in the future but with a changed approach, supporting the canvass with publicity activity and being more selective in the wards targeted. The consensus therefore appears to be that intensive canvassing is a worthwhile exercise in working towards a goal of the completeness of the electoral register.

This view is supported by just under two-thirds (seven, 64 per cent) of LAs explicitly stating their intention, funding permitting, to repeat the activity in the future and/or recommending its application in other LAs/VJBs.

Evidently these activities were predominantly focused on social and private renters, suggesting it is among these groups where they have been seen to be especially effective. However, reports from one targeted at students (Reading) and another at attainers (South Tyneside) and their respective success rates of 25 per cent and 31 per cent demonstrate that these methods may also be effective for other groups, even if to a lesser extent. Both these scores are above the average success rates achieved for partnership working and publicity activity.

Chapter 7
Partnership working

An assessment of the written feedback received indicates that partnership working formed a significant part of many of the activities undertaken. This was true not only of the five partnership LAs from which we have received feedback but for many of the teams pursuing canvassing and publicity work. There was consequently considerable variation in both the extent of partnership work and what it entailed in each context. Despite partnership activity appearing to have enjoyed the least success (an average of 13 per cent of target electors registering, n=4) and to have been the most costly in price per registration (£11.96), the lessons presented by solely partnership-based activities will have important implications across the range of possible maximising registration activity.

The evidence suggests partnership working can be used to support various activities. Those pursued by the partnership-based projects included:

- Outreach work through democratic engagement workshops and roadshows, interactive discussion events, and community champions;

- Targeted and open canvassing through partners (such as housing associations), in town centres, and in local colleges;

- The inclusion of registration forms in tenant welcome packs;

- Messages in partner publications;

- Promotional materials displayed in libraries, leisure centres, and other venues with high footfall of target URGs;

- Building registration into community learning services, including English for Speakers of Other Languages courses where there is an element of citizenship education; and

- The development of social housing networks.

These activities involved partnership across departments within councils as well as work with relevant external organisations. This and the list above imply partnership working is a highly adaptable approach and can be applied to support a number of initiatives aimed at maximising registration. There is scope for considerable creativity and innovation when extending the design and delivery of activities beyond the traditional work of electoral services through the input of other groups.

Feedback from the LAs suggested that all the activities listed had a positive impact on their trying to achieve new URG registrations and would be things they would look to replicate and develop in the future. Particularly successful were targeted and 'closed' activities where attention was on particular groups, such as an existing community group or a school or college (Bradford, North East Lincolnshire and Leicester). This was in contrast to more open initiatives, for example town centre canvassing, which while securing some new registrations was limited in its success (Leicester).Working with housing providers to develop networks and share registration resources were also in the main considered to have added value to the activities (North East Lincolnshire and Bournemouth).

While it remains important to acknowledge the feedback received, particularly on those components of the projects which were found by coordinating and delivery staff to have been successful, the overall success rates cannot be overlooked. There is certainly the potential to develop a range of methods for targeting URGs when electoral services are open to working with partners. However, the results achieved suggest it may be helpful to concentrate on a small number of activities to allow them the time and resources needed to make an impact. Multiple opportunities might be presented by partnership working but LAs/VJBs will still need to be strategic and focused in how they develop and use these.

7.1. Youth services

Of the five projects, three focused their attention on attainers and/or young people (Bradford, Gateshead, and Leicester). Here particular emphasis was placed on working with council youth services and associated youth and young people's councils. Doing so enabled electoral services staff to draw on the expertise of council staff and practitioners skilled in working with young people specifically. Electoral services would be available to provide training on registration and election processes while youth services could provide insight into the types of activities, messaging, locations and times which would most appeal to attainers and young people.

There was therefore the potential for any resources and planned activity to be shaped and delivered by those who know the target audience best. Youth service partnerships also brought EROs access to established networks and forums in the youth work sector and opportunities to incorporate electoral registration into existing youth activity plans within the council. With many of the structures and channels already in place to undertake activity, some start-up costs associated with resource creation and event planning could in theory be lowered.

'The partnership with GYC [Gateshead Youth Council] has brought to the table a creative approach, enormous energy […] and a set of skills well outside the usual complement boasted by the typical electoral administrator.' (Gateshead)

'[There was an] opportunity identified to extend development work already undertaken by the Youth Service, to incorporate engagement in democracy; contacts and structure as a conduit for this type of work was [sic] already undertaken in place to support the initiative. (Bradford)

Working with youth services and organisations also enabled LAs to develop resources and messaging relevant to the audience in question by working directly with young people. This included young people's input in both the design and delivery of activities. The result in two cases was a youth-targeted registration form which included simplified wording, explanations for why particular pieces of information were needed, and details on student registration opportunities (Bradford, Leicester).

'Having young people themselves design and front the campaign was successful […] a campaign designed and delivered by young people, for young people. We also invited apprentices, graduates and step-up colleges within the council to gather views from 18-24 year olds.' (Leicester)

Further evidence of electoral services' positive experiences of working with council youth services can be found in a number of the other funded projects. One intensive canvass for example supplemented its principal canvass activity through helping its youth mayor and youth cabinet to secure an additional 300 registrations at schools and colleges (Lambeth). One publicity campaign received help in conducting focus groups with young people by working with local youth groups (Cornwall).

To reach more young people, there were some attempts made to extend partnerships to schools and colleges. This was found to be difficult however with some sixth form colleges unwilling to provide space in timetables or assemblies to deliver workshops and messages (Gateshead). This supports the experiences of a publicity campaign where school leaders were reluctant to support any maximising registration activity (Ceredigion). In contrast however, there are two reports of positive experiences of working with student representatives and student unions (Reading and Ceredigion), and another of working with college bursars (Westminster). Moreover two non-partnership LAs have stated their interest in developing partnerships with schools, colleges and youth groups in the future to support their canvassing and publicity activities (South Tyneside and London) suggesting there is advantage perceived to doing so.

This is an addition to Cabinet Office work to facilitate partnerships between the National Union of Students (NUS) and affiliated Students' Unions, university registrars (Academic Registrars Council, ARC), local electoral registration staff and other interested parties through the Student Forum. Positive responses have been received from electoral staff about progress being made within the Forum:

> *'I have been really pleased with the response from the two Universities in Lincoln including their willingness to assist us with the process.'*
> *(Steve Swain, Lincoln)*

> *'We were all very impressed with the way in which all of the Registrars, their staff and the Students' Unions were all so keen to work with us to ensure students were registered to vote in the easiest way possible and some of the wonderful ideas they came up with.'*
> *(Lynda McDaid, Canterbury)*

Initiatives developed through this have included plans to make the online portal for IER registration (www.gov.uk/register-to-vote) available to students, for example through promoting it on student intranets and building online registration into university and college enrolment.

The picture therefore appears to be mixed with some youth partners being more supportive and cooperative than others. The findings overall suggest that working directly with council youth services can be a positive experience. It is a way of reducing the burden on electoral services by allowing activities to be delivered by other departments and agencies, utilising existing skills and networks within the council and making electoral services more confident in the relevance and strength of the activities delivered for their target URG. Alternative youth partners can also bring benefits but the evidence implies that it can often be more challenging to initially engage them. More time may therefore need to be freed up to develop these relationships.

7.2. Housing providers

The two remaining partnership LAs which have provided feedback looked to target social and private housing residents (Bournemouth and North East Lincolnshire). In one the emphasis of activity was placed primarily on developing working relationships with Housing Associations to support canvassing activity (Bournemouth). In contrast, the other adopted a community champion approach, employing an individual based in the community to work with and across a range of partners (North East Lincolnshire). This included the creation of a social housing contacts network and working through children's centres, local health initiatives, and community learning services to access potential electors.

There was mixed success in building and maintaining these relationships. As with LAs during their canvass activity, one found some housing associations to be reluctant to assist them. Most were receptive however. Problems were also reported on attempting to make contact with key prospective partners during initial stages (North East Lincolnshire). There were difficulties getting responses to phone calls and emails and more time subsequently had to be taken to find alternative contacts. Maintaining relationships to ensure there is always access to a named contact would therefore appear advisable, as well as having a single contact point within the electoral services team. This could help overcome issues associated with staff changes, reported by one LA as presenting difficulties and could *'lessen the annual resistance and chasing'* (Bournemouth)*.*

Case study 2: Community Champions (North East Lincolnshire)

The electoral services team in one unitary authority developed a community champion approach to partnership working. This involved appointing an individual with strong social skills and community connections to coordinate activity in two under-registered wards, focusing particularly on social renters. The community champion was able to develop resources and deliver activities while also building links with key community figures and centres both within and external to the council. This included children's centres, student unions, further and higher education providers, local health initiatives, community learning services, and social housing contacts. Working across a range of partners presented opportunities for various activities to be pursued including open canvassing in public places with good footfall and planned visits to existing groups, classes and events. At events, unusual and interactive paper resources, developed by the community champion, proved popular in conveying messages in a visual and engaging format.

The decision to work with numerous partners enabled the authority to try and test differing methods for maximising registration. Particularly successful were activities carried out at specific classes and workshops where they could be targeted versus more open canvassing sessions, and the skills of the community champion themself. Their existing relationships with target groups and knowledge of the local area were considered key, as was their freeing up electoral services and ensuring a single point of contact.

The community champion approach presents a good example of coordinating and delivering a partnership-based initiative. While there were challenges these could have be minimised had more time been available to build on the community champion's existing contacts to confirm specific events and opportunities. The approach could also be scaled up through the recruitment of a small team at specific points in the year to organise more activities and extend across more wards.

A two-ward approach in one of the LAs also revealed the effect that different local levels of activity can have on how easy it is to develop and manage partnerships (North East Lincolnshire). In one ward the existing presence of community engagement and diverse agencies made initiating activity much easier than in the alternative ward where there was only one community centre. Efforts are therefore needed to ensure those individuals in areas where community activity has been traditionally absent are not disadvantaged further.

7.3. Potential for long-term impact

The process by which partnership working developed in the LAs was fairly similar. The importance of ongoing communication and truly integrated design and delivery of activity across partners was a key theme. In one example the electoral services team worked closely with youth services from the outset, a process which included five detailed planning meetings to design and schedule their activities (Bradford). They felt doing so enabled them to incorporate the youth service's skills and resources at every stage.

Importantly it was noted by many of the LAs that partnerships are a long-term process. This might perhaps start to explain why these activities were some of the least successful of those funded and yet enjoyed mostly positive written feedback. There is consequently potential for these activities to enjoy successes in the longer-term. The process of identifying relevant partners, and individuals within these, and making a case for working in partnership with them can take time, but once the partnerships, or at least relationships, are in the place, opportunities for activity can develop. This reinforces the need to sustain contact with key partners throughout the electoral cycle. Four of five responding partnership-based LAs referenced this view.

> *'We learnt you need to maintain good connections with the HAs [Housing Associations] throughout the year. This will lessen the annual resistance and chasing.' (Bournemouth)*

> *'[If] the project was to be rolled out again in subsequent years, productive relationships with centres would in time be formed and these sessions would become a familiar and well established fixture.' (Gateshead)*

> *'A network of Social Housing contacts has been established and will be maintained beyond the life of this initiative, with the intention of maintaining a more up-to-date Electoral Register from the more transient element of the population.' (North East Lincolnshire)*

The evidence presented here suggests partnership working is not a quick fix for registration activity but that it may still be important as a longer-term process. Limiting LAs/VJBs to completing partnership activity within a relatively short timeframe is perhaps an inappropriate approach, particularly where partnerships are not yet established. One of the LAs discussed here chose to delay its activity, for example. This means we are yet to receive full results with this decision being taken by the LA, in part, to allow necessary relationships to develop prior to delivery (Gateshead).

7.4. Skills and resources

A key advantage identified by the partnership-based activities was the skills and resources it brought to electoral services. As stated above, youth services already possess the knowledge and experience of working with this target group and access to local contacts and stakeholders. Similarly housing departments often already have trusted relationships with their tenants and so can be used as channels for delivering a range of messaging, including democratic engagement and registration. Arguably all LAs/VJBs could benefit from the existing skills and resources in their councils when looking to design and deliver any form of maximising registration activity, be it canvassing, publicity or outreach work.

Where partners are able to deliver activities directly, the burden on electoral services staff can also be reduced. Staff will necessarily remain involved in maximising registration work, a statutory duty in ensuring the completeness and accuracy of the electoral register, through their directing and overseeing activities. However, by working with partners to target some URGs they may find this affords them more time to focus on those URGs where appropriate partners are less easily found.

> *'As the project is being delivered by a partner organisation the burden, and therefore impact on electoral services has been minimal beyond the planning and application process under the max reg [maximising registration] scheme.' (Gateshead)*

Importantly, while partners have much to offer electoral services, a training and supervisory role remains. Two of the responding LAs discussed their providing comprehensive training to partners prior to any activity delivery (Bradford, North East Lincolnshire). This will be particularly important where partners are the sole deliverers of the activities and electoral services staff will not be present if they are to ensure the target audiences receive sufficient and reliable information.

7.5. Timing

One LA reported issues with timing and drew attention to the fact that *'what may suit Electoral Services will not always suit partners' timescales' (Bradford)*. This is a key issue when thinking about partnership work. For example, the timeframe for the first

phase of maximising registration stipulated that activity should occur during the postponed canvass 2013/14. In one LA however youth services were already scheduled to be engaging young people on a number of issues at events in the lead-up to and over the Christmas period. The spring was suggested as a better time to link the activity to a planned programme of youth engagement in which political literacy and citizenship would better sit. Similarly, timing was an issue for another when working with children's centres (North East Lincolnshire). Many groups and classes were stopped for three weeks over the holiday period and while in one ward alternative networks were available, in their second target ward this considerably hindered progress.

Starting discussions early with prospective partners and maintaining ongoing relationships might be one way in which to mitigate these issues. As with canvassing activity, flexibility in approach will also be important. The benefit which partners bring is their expert knowledge of target URGs. This should extend to their insight into when activities will be most suitable alongside their granting access to URGs at specific times through their existing work. Being strict in planning activity to run alongside the annual canvass may not maximise the potential of partnership work. This is a lesson both for LAs/VJBs as they plan their activities and the Cabinet Office as it considers the approach to maximising registration funding in the future.

7.6. Lessons

Despite appearing, in the short-term, unable to meet the registration rates and low costs of intensive canvassing and publicity activity, all participating LAs reported predominantly positive experiences of partnership working.

> *'Partnership working, if relevant, can be and was vital to the success, by using the skills and resources already established to work in the most efficient way.' (Bradford)*

Partnership working can take time to develop but enables LAs and VJBs to access skills, resources and networks they might otherwise lack. While start-up costs in time, effort, and finance can be high with little immediate gain the potential for longer-term success remains. Once these partnerships are in place some of the burdens on electoral services staff can be reduced. A range of activities within the partnership approaches were pursued demonstrating its adaptability and subsequent relevance for all forms of maximising registration activity.

Chapter 8
Publicity campaigns

Publicity and communications campaigns were developed and pursued by five of the LAs. The activities had varying levels of success with their impact being measured by registrations but also the of reach of communication and levels of engagement and awareness. By the very nature of such campaigns it was not always possible to record accurately the number of registrations resulting from the activity while their remit often extended beyond registration to promote democratic engagement more broadly. It has subsequently been more difficult to determine how successful and cost-effective the activities were when attempting direct comparison with the other activity types which include a solely registration-based success measure.

In two cases no or limited registration data was available at the time of writing (Cornwall and Greater Manchester). Given the absence of actual registration figures, modelling has therefore been used to estimate the number of unregistered individuals likely to have been reached by the activities and in turn the number of the unregistered individuals thought to have registered as a result. This included determining the number of individuals in the target group, using Electoral Commission registration rates to estimate the number likely to be already registered, and these same figures to approximate how many unregistered individuals reached would be likely to have registered following the activity. Figures on 'reach' have made reference to the readership of publications, website visits and social media interactions, for example (see Annex B).

In the instance of another however, a bespoke website which could record actual registrations resulting directly from the activity provided an opportunity for more robust data to be collected (London). The website, advertised solely through the campaign and difficult to locate online without the campaign's instructions, provided individuals with the opportunity to pre-populate a registration form which could then be sent out for signing and return. As more accurate data, a decision has been taken to use the number of registrations actually achieved, a comparatively low figure of 719, rather than a modelled estimate. The result is a relatively low success rate of just 3 per cent, and a cost per registration of £140.06.

It must be noted however that this fails to take account of the number of individuals the campaign is expected to have reached and potentially influenced. For example, the website received 17,200 demonstrating a high level of interest. A publicity campaign may encourage an individual to register but not necessarily through the campaign's advertised method. Individuals engaging with the campaign may have for instance registered through aboutmyvote.co.uk or by returning their household canvass form. Electoral Commission data for the 32 London boroughs covered by the activity, for instance, shows a net increase of 39,728 electors on the electoral register. While it is not possible to suggest causation, the increase in registrations in London implies a likelihood of wider influence beyond the registrations recorded by the campaign website.

Any assessment of publicity campaigns, particularly those delivered across multiple LAs must therefore take into account the difficulties of recording registrations and measuring impact and effectiveness. As one respondent explained:

> *'I think the publicity campaign is a good thing but it's impossible to judge whether that had any material effect.' (Oxford)*

There is equally an inherent risk that electoral registration communication campaigns will in practice be attractive only to individuals already engaged in politics, potentially failing to reach those who are disengaged. There is however a related advantage in that of all the three activity types they possess the greatest potential to reach a wide range of people and extend activity beyond the target group. All five of those supported by the first phase of the maximising registration fund focused on young people, attainers and students (with two extending their campaigns to target social renters) but it is assumed that the activities may have reached further to influence other unregistered individuals. For example, the London-wide campaign reported receiving 910 registrations, only 719 of these from the boroughs targeted, implying wider reach beyond the target audience. This could include commuters or students, for example, resident outside of but working in London.

> *'[…] as our campaign was digital and pan-London we could gain exposure to many more [than target groups].' (London)*

8.1. Multi-channel approach

A universal feature of all five campaigns was the adoption of a multi-channel approach, LAs utilising both digital and print media and advertising as well as face-to-face outreach. This was seen as important in ensuring there was wide reach and as many members of the target URGs were reached as possible. It also reflected thoughts that what is a good mode of communication for some groups and individuals will not be good for another.

Table 8.1: Examples of publicity and communications maximising registration activity

Communication method	Channels
Social media	- Facebook - Twitter - Email - Text messages - YouTube
Print media	- Newsletters - Postcards - Football programmes - Magazines
Digital media	- Websites (developed exclusively for campaigns) - Council websites - Videos - Smartphone apps - Digital advertising - Radio - Corporate bulletins and e-newsletters
Physical advertisements	- Poster sites - Bus shelters 'On board' bus advertising and bus tickets - Bar advertising on static and digital screens
Outreach	- Face-to-face events - Conference attendance - School visits

Two LAs used focus groups to inform their choice of communication channels (Cornwall and London) and in another an online survey was used (Ceredigion). Subsequent discussions and results were used to identify barriers to registration, the modes through which campaigns are best delivered and the types and tone of messages which will have most impact. It was accepted that these can take time to arrange but remain a useful opinion gathering exercise to inform registration activities, particularly those which focus on publicity.

> *'Organising and attending the focus groups took up time and resources but was extremely worthwhile […] [We would] run more focus groups and talk to the target audience about what the message should be and which communication channels.' (Cornwall)*

8.1.1. Digital and social media

The feedback received suggests varied success of the methods outlined in Table 2. While it is difficult to isolate each activity to track effectiveness, analytics provided by two of the LAs indicated that digital advertising can be particularly useful in drawing attention to a campaign and directing individuals to further information (Manchester and London). As one LA reported, *'digital works' (London)*. In one 60 per cent of visitors to the website came from digital advertising, most of these through mobile app and video advertising (London), and in the other as much as 72 per cent of web traffic to the campaign website could be attributed to digital marketing (Manchester). Whether this resulted in new registrations is less clear but the evidence suggests a clear role for digital media in generating initial awareness.

> *'Use of rich media for use in digital marketing is recommended for future campaigns of a similar nature to help create a buzz online and to help drive relevant clicks to the campaign website.' (Manchester)*

An identified benefit of digital activity versus more traditional paper based methods was the ability to adapt and respond to feedback throughout the campaign. One LA discussed refining its online campaign and strategy based on real-time information (London). Subsequent adjustments to their website during the activity period included simplifying their campaign messaging, making registration a more prominent feature of the site and reducing restrictions. Where campaigns have a long- as well as short-term purpose, the flexibility digital channels allow can be important in ensuring resources remain relevant and continue to develop with feedback from the audiences they seek to engage.

Within the sphere of digital marketing, views on the usefulness of social media specifically were mixed. It was certainly found to be a useful tool for reaching individuals and generating awareness. As previously stated focus groups with young people in one LA identified social media as a key channel for engaging with them on these issues (Cornwall).

In one example 24.7 million of 33.9 million digital marketing impressions were recorded through Facebook, this being the largest share of the campaign's digital activity (Manchester). However, from this activity, digital marketing in total only drove 22,980 visits to the campaign website suggesting interest was not necessarily sustained beyond initial contact with the campaign. Similarly, the Twitter hashtag linked to the campaign resulted in just 465 'click throughs'. The implication is that

while individuals, young people in particular, might be attracted to a campaign promoted through social media, on its own social media may be unable to generate sufficient interest in registration for this to translate into sustained interactions and new electors.

This finding was repeated across two more LAs. In one, from approximately 1.9 million page impressions of web banners on two local newspaper websites (Oxford Mail and Oxford Times), only 484 'click throughs' to the council's electoral services page were achieved (Oxford). In another example, it was felt that any successes in registering new students to vote could not be attributed to social media activity (Ceredigion). There was disappointment in the level of engagement with social media, achieving just 47 'likes' on Facebook. Consequently for future campaigns their feedback recommended relying less on social media, although they do still intend to use it. Crucially, it emphasised the need for quality and tailored content. Social media is not a panacea and alone will be unlikely to have the impact hoped for by maximising registration activity.

> *'Social media does not make the topic of registering to vote any more appealing.' (Ceredigion)'*

> *'[Marketing] drove visitors to the website but many didn't interact when the [sic] arrived.' (London)*

Social media remains important however. Reaching URGs through social media where appropriate, for example young people, can be a significant channel of communication for generating awareness and interest. It is an inexpensive channel which can transmit messages to a large audience. To maximise its potential the evaluation evidence suggests it requires strong messaging, an attractive and engaging resource to which it is attached (for example, a more developed campaign website) and support from wider publicity activity.

A further issue for social media is the need for ongoing input and monitoring. It is not enough simply to have accounts across a number of different providers. Effective social media requires a regular push which can take time to coordinate and maintain (London). This may be particularly difficult where activities are working across multiple LAs or with internal and external partners if there is no unified channel or voice. A single member of staff to coordinate social media may mitigate this as well as use of social media management tools (Ceredigion).

8.1.2. Face-to-face outreach

There was very little evidence returned on the possible effectiveness of more traditional, non-digital forms of advertising, such as posters and print media. There

was however a great deal of support for direct outreach and in-person activity. Focus groups with young people and social renters for example confirmed a preference for face-to-face communication (Cornwall). Young people in particular were found to respond well to outreach activities (London). The conclusions were reached not only by the publicity activities discussed here but also by one of the partnership organisations which found face-to-face activity to be the most effective approach for securing registrations (Leicester)

> *'Although we could drive traffic to the site […] the barriers to them registering remain significant and they would not register on the site without face to face persuasion.' (London)*

In addition, one project has extended its communication campaign through funding provided under phase two of the maximising registration fund to pilot events in community venues and wider outreach using a local radio station media bus (Manchester). This will work alongside their digital campaign, the two strands of activity complementing each other. Similarly another partnership LA intends to use workshops and a series of roadshows to complete its maximising registration activity (Gateshead). There therefore appears to be fairly broad consensus that publicity campaigns can benefit from using more face-to-face channels of communication. In addition, where activities are targeted and employ more focused, smaller-scale interventions, such as a campaign concentrated on students (Ceredigion), interventions appear to be more successful than those which are wider reaching.

However, in one LA outreach work was only to a small extent successful in securing new registrations among attainers (Oxford). School visits here achieved only fifteen 'new' registrations. More registration forms were received from registered individuals. The low registration result is not necessarily therefore indicative of outreach failures. Rather it implies the importance of data matching and planning of target sites, similar to techniques used in intensive canvassing, to ensure interventions are better directed at groups and individuals most in need of activity.

Overall the results from the five publicity campaigns suggest that a multi-channel approach could be beneficial. However, while all forms of digital, online, print and social media offer significant reach and awareness raising potential, serious consideration might be given to face-to-face outreach. From the evidence collected so far it appears often to be this which is the difference between registration awareness and positive registration engagement. This is arguably a more costly approach if the same numbers of unregistered electors are to be reached as can be achieved through digital and social media.

Case study 3: student publicity campaign (Ceredigion)

In a county council funded by the first phase of maximising registration activity, a publicity campaign was delivered. A large part of this focused on registering students since these make up a considerable proportion of the local population at 14 per cent overall, and in some areas as much as 40 per cent.

There were multiple components of the initiative with activities being delivered via social media, poster campaigns, direct communications and a targeted mail out. Students themselves were involved in the design of the campaign's key messaging and materials, through an online survey (133 response), workshops (20 in attendance), and market research. This led to the possibility of a fine being incurred for non-registration being a key campaign message and shaped the development of the campaign slogan. Through a mail out exercise, students were also provided with information on political issues which affect students to emphasise the relevance of elections. The research further determined where posters would be displayed, the designs and locations changing depending on their target audience. This meant posters were displayed across a variety of venues including doctors' surgeries, dentists, hairdressers, boutiques, beauty parlours, student unions, post offices, libraries, leisure centres, and student bars, ensuring wide reach. An immediate increase in calls and emails to the office followed the display of the posters.

Working with external partners was important, particularly the local press, student unions, universities, colleges and local charities and organisations. Additional information and resources could subsequently be targeted directly at individual students. University email addresses were highlighted as a good channel for reaching students and, as with the posters, an immediate increase in calls and enquiries to the office on student issues followed the sending of a registration email to two local universities. A dedicated email address and phone number provided a method for monitoring these interactions and eased the burden on electoral services staff by creating a single point of contact.

8.2. Campaign messages

In two LAs messaging was developed through focus groups (Cornwall and London) and in another through an online survey (Ceredigion). These discussions and methods were used to identify barriers to registration, the modes through which campaigns are best delivered, and the types and tone of messages which will have most impact. It was accepted that these can take time to arrange but remain a useful opinion gathering exercise to inform registration activities.

> *'Organising and attending the focus groups took up time and resources but was extremely worthwhile […] [We would] run more focus groups and talk to the target audience about what the message should be and which communication channels.' (Cornwall)*

Informative messaging and resources came forward as crucial with there often being an information deficit observed, particularly among young people. This included being unsure of what rights and benefits electoral registration can and cannot affect, confusion on student registration issues, and a lack of awareness of attainer registration eligibility. Under IER, where responsibility moves from household to individual, providing this kind of information could prove to be even more significant.

Similarly, persuasive messaging was considered necessary to vary according to target group. Where working with young people, for example, one LA chose to emphasise motivational messages relating to issues such as credit ratings and phone contracts. It was also suggested that highlighting the potential of incurring a fine for non-registration could encourage more URGs to register. Here an above average registration rate of 35 per cent was achieved (Ceredigion).

Other messaging highlighted the connection between registering and voting and, in turn, having your voice heard on issues (London, Cornwall and Manchester). Campaigns using this kind message, all to target young people, varied in success from 3 per cent to an estimate of 44 per cent. There is therefore no consensus on whether this is likely to be a successful approach. Moreover, for the majority of LAs a range of publicity materials with different messages were used. There is consequently little evidence available here as to whether tailoring communication messages had a significant impact on registration rates. Wider research, however, suggests this may be an effective policy[1].

8.3. Long-term potential

Of the publicity activities conducted during phase one, all five have the potential for a longer-term impact than that which is detailed above. There may be significant start-up costs, for example in the design and development of resources and materials, but these can be used beyond the initial activity. In the case of two projects, it was necessary to outsource some resource creation, notably website and video creation, which used a large proportion of their funding, took time and required extensive supervision (Cornwall and London). Now these resources are in place however, it will be possible to re-use them throughout the electoral cycle and for future maximising registration campaigns. A further LA is intending to use the money from phase two maximising registration to extend its activities based around existing resources, funded by phase one, including a bespoke website (Manchester). LAs have also

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[1] GfK NOP (2012) *Under-registered groups & individual electoral registration.* London, The Cabinet Office. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/under-registered-groups-and-individual-electoral-registration

expressed their intention to continue using their social media accounts for future activity (Ceredigion).

It is recognised that it can take time to develop an effective publicity campaign. Strict and short timescales may not therefore be appropriate for all activity types. This reinforces the findings from both intensive canvassing and partnership working.

> '[…] the campaign was delivered in an extremely tight timeframe and therefore lost out on some channels that were available […] In addition, further work and coordination across GM [Greater Manchester] authorities was not possible given the timescales involved […]' (Manchester)

Publicity activity in particular has the potential to continue beyond a prescribed end date and ongoing monitoring and evaluation would be suggested as a result. Four of the five responding LAs for instance explicitly stated their intentions to review and refine their original strategies so as to continue with their maximising registration activities in the run up to the European elections (22 May 2014, registration deadline 9 May 2014) and under IER. One example involves an LA already starting to work with universities by 're-badging' publicity materials, including videos and posters, for use by two local universities (Cornwall – University of Exeter and Plymouth University). This specific activity had gained 59 new registrations when the evaluation was submitted but with this work only just beginning the expectation is that this number will grow. Publicity activity can also be used to complement more traditional canvass activity. The potential for encouraging more registrations in the future therefore remains across the activities and we would expect to see registration rates improve further amongst the target URGs in these areas.

8.4. Council communications

Electoral services staff reported benefitting from working with and through council communications teams. In one LA, the council's communications team was the lead partner in organising and delivering the publicity campaign (Oxford). This was an opportunity to access existing skills and expertise within the council. Using existing council communication channels also provided an additional way to reach URG audiences at no extra financial cost. This included messages on council Twitter and Facebook accounts (in addition to those accounts attached to the campaigns), in newsletters and council publications and on council owned outdoor advertising space (Manchester). Council venues, such as libraries, were also found to be available for distributing campaign leaflets and posters.

8.5. Lessons

It is difficult to assess fully the impact of publicity and communications campaigns on registration rates but on the evidence available suggestions are that they can be effective in raising awareness of and attracting interest in registration processes. The reach of the campaign in Manchester involved 25,799 unique visits to their bespoke website. Moreover where they involve face-to-face outreach and direct communications, they can secure a large number of registrations at a relatively low cost. Ceredigion was one of the most cost-effective activities throughout the 24 LAs at approximately £0.90 per registration and had a success rate of 35 per cent. What is evident, however, is that while such activities might not be as effective in the short-term as intensive canvassing, they have long-term potential to generate interest and engagement with registration. There is also the opportunity to extend messaging beyond registration to encourage participation at elections.

A multi-channel approach in particular appears to be crucial in ensuring a publicity campaign maximises its reach, engages with its audiences, and sustains interest through to registration. Where possible, electoral services teams should be as creative as possible in thinking of ways in which a range of communication methods can be combined to maximise campaign impact. Working with council's communications teams may aid this process. Finally, while modes of communication may be successful in reaching particular audiences, an equal amount of attention must be paid to the content of any media, marketing and promotion. This lesson arguably extends to all three activity types.

Chapter 9
Conclusion

The experiences of the 24 LAs successful in receiving funding as part of the first stage of maximising registration activity present a large body of evidence to inform future strategies aimed at registering new and missing electors. Their feedback provides numerous examples of good practice as well as cases of where certain activities have been less successful, be this particular elements of an activity or their effectiveness in targeting some URGs versus others. Significantly, the activities have demonstrated that it is not impossible to encourage registration among individuals for whom non-registration and non-response to the annual canvass is habitual.

The initiatives pursued often involved several components but primarily centred around three main activities: intensive canvassing, partnership working and publicity and communications campaigns. Intensive canvassing has been shown to be particularly successful with on average almost half of all unregistered individuals in the target URGs registering as a result of the activity (46 per cent). It involved canvassers receiving specialist URG training, additional visits being made to non-responding properties, targeted mail-outs and personalised communications. This type of activity was the most popular of the three for electoral services teams and was particularly successful when targeting social renters. Even where it was less successful, for example among attainers and students, the proportion of target registrations achieved still appeared to be greater than the average success rate for partnership- and publicity-based activities.

Publicity campaigns tended to be directed at young people, attainers and students, and had varied success. While their reach was typically high, often from adopting a multi-channel approach which utilised a range of digital, social and print media alongside face-to-face outreach, it appeared harder to record and secure individual registrations. Nevertheless, approximately a fifth (21 per cent) of target electors is estimated to have registered as a result of the activities. Face-to-face components were found to be especially important in reinforcing wider campaign messaging and in converting an interest in politics and the maximising registration campaigns themselves into actual registrations.

Partnership activities were on the surface the least successful, registering only 13 per cent of target electors on average. However, the feedback from those LAs involved in this work was largely positive with many considering the activities to have been of benefit. Importantly, much of the perceived benefit was in the development of relationships and networks with local stakeholders and the setting up of activities with long-term potential. It would therefore be expected that there will be a positive legacy of these activities with structures now in place to support future maximising registration work.

The average cost per new registration, for those which could be directly attributed to the activities and were received within the reporting period, was £16.20. It is expected however that over time these costs will fall. The resources and networks developed through these activities are now in place to be used again the future. Many of the LAs included in this report further state the possibilities for sharing practice and materials with other LAs and VJBs. There is therefore a lasting legacy which may help reduce the cost of maximising registration in the future.

The lessons identified in this report present a number of suggestions which electoral services teams may wish to consider as they seek to maximise registration rates in their areas in the future. These relate to each activity type as well as maximising registration work as a whole. EROs are best placed to determine which of the activity types will be most appropriate for their local areas and which groups they wish to engage. It is hoped however that these suggestions will support LAs and VJBs in designing these activities, and so meet ERO performance standards and increase the number of individuals on the electoral register.

Moreover, there has been a great deal of development of campaigns, delivery plans, messages, methods and resources, carried out by the LAs in this report. LAs and VJBs looking to maximise registration in their area may therefore wish to talk with other electoral services teams to learn from and share good practice. Just over half of LAs (eleven, 52 per cent) were clear in recommending their activities to other LAs/VJBs. This was spread across the three activity types – intensive canvassing (four), partnership (four) and publicity (three) – indicating that there are opportunities for other LAs/VJBs to benefit from this work whatever the activities they choose to pursue.

More widely, a key challenge highlighted by the report has been the methods available for measuring the impact of registration activities. Where LAs or groups of LAs are in a position to roll out similar schemes in the future, they may wish to consider shaping their approach to make it easier to measure the impact of any maximising registration activity. This could be achieved by collecting information on the level of under-registration for groups of interest on a regular basis or simply before and after implementation of the activity. Thus an indication of how levels of registration have changed as a result could be found. Alternatively, activity outcomes could be compared against LAs not undertaking URG-specific maximising registration activity but still monitoring registration levels for URGs – a control group. Furthermore, clarification and standardisation of the specific group being targeted

and the perceived barriers to individuals in the group registering would assist in identifying, if the scheme proves successful, appropriate instances for repeating the activity.

Cabinet Office will continue to explore potential ways of improving the completeness and accuracy of the register beyond the launch of IER in Great Britain. While acknowledging the small sample size, the considerable amount of evidence collected through this exercise will be very important in helping to achieve this aim. In particular the findings of this report will play a vital role in informing future maximising registration strategy for this financial year and beyond.