FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

This year is the first full canvass that will be completed under Individual Electoral Registration (IER), the new registration system that went live in June 2014. There are some differences between this and the way that canvass has operated in the past, but the reason for canvass remains the same; we need to make sure that the electoral register is up to date.

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THE CANVASS FORM

1. What is the form I have received?

The yellow A4 canvass form has been replaced with an A3 Household Enquiry Form or HEF. The HEF is sent so that we can find out who is living in a particular property. Every property in the borough will receive at least one of these forms. If we already have people registered at your address, your form will look like this, and be pre-filled with the information we currently have:

If we do not have anybody registered at the address, the form will be blank and look slightly different:
If the information on the HEF is correct, then all you need to do is respond by any of the methods outlined below or by sending it back to us in the post. There will be a pre-paid reply envelope sent with every HEF so that it won’t cost you anything to respond to the HEF by post. If everything on the form is accurate, all you need to do is respond to confirm that it’s correct – we won’t send you anything else.

2. Why do you send me forms every year?
   It's the law! We need to compile accurate records and this is our way of obtaining information from each household. As long as someone meets the registration criteria (e.g. age, nationality, etc) they are eligible for registration (including those with, for example, learning difficulties).

3. Does everyone have to sign?
   No. On the HEF, any one person from the household can sign. If there are any changes or queries then we will contact those affected individually.

4. Order of names on the form
   The register is produced in house number order within alphabetical streets, which are listed within polling districts. Within each household, we organise the names to appear alphabetically. So, for example, if "Bernard" and "Allison" have a son called "Alan", on the register they would appear alphabetically as: Alan, Allison and then Bernard.

5. Why have you sent a reminder?
   We need to get as many people registered as possible within just a 4 month period. Many people register straight away, but others can simply forget to do it, so by sending a reminder after 3 to 4 weeks, it helps to jog people's memories.

6. I have a reminder but filled in the original form?
   We need to send data to the printers about 10 days before the reminders are delivered to householders, so your form may have been received after the data was prepared. The easiest thing is to telephone us to see whether your form has been received during that 10 day period, or else simply complete the second one and send it back to us in the pre-paid envelope provided. We would prefer you to complete two forms, rather than none at all.

7. I've lost my HEF?
   If we don't get your original form back, then you'll receive a reminder automatically at the beginning of September. If the same thing happens again at that stage, please contact us and we will either send you a replacement form or give you the details so that you can respond by text, phone or internet.
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TELEPHONE AND INTERNET REGISTRATION

8. Freephone telephone registration number?
   0800 197 8602 - You should only attempt to register by phone if there are no changes to the canvass form.

9. Text registration number?
   80212 - You will need to send the reference number in the top right of the canvass form to 80212; if successful, a short confirmation message will be sent. You should only attempt to register by text if there are no changes required to the canvass form.

10. Text registration - do I leave spaces?
    It does not matter.

11. Mobile phone registration?
    Yes - You can register using a mobile phone rather than a landline, but please be aware that it will not be a "freephone" call (unless your mobile phone plan includes free minutes to 0800 numbers) - your usual mobile phone network charges will apply.

12. Internet registration address?
    www.registerbyinternet.com/wellingborough - You should only attempt to register on the internet if there are no changes required to your canvass form.

13. Confirmation of details received?
    People successfully registering by phone will hear a "thank you" message; by text, will receive a confirmation receipt text; and by internet, will receive a written electronic reply. Due to the high volume of paperwork being received and postage costs involved, hand-written forms cannot be acknowledged.

14. Where is the security code?
    The security code can be found here:

15. Do I need to remember the security code?
    No - They are there to enable you to register by telephone, text or internet during this canvass period only. You should only register by telephone, text or internet if no householder details have changed.
16. Can’t make changes online or by phone?
The telephone or internet should only be used if there are no changes to make. If you have registered in this way or using text messaging by mistake, you will now need to cross out anything on the form that is no longer valid and add any new information to the form. Please then write on the form that it is a "change to earlier registration", sign it and send it back to the council, so that we can make the amendments for you manually. If you have destroyed the form before realising your mistake, please contact the Elections Team to obtain a new form.

17. None of the details have changed?
We still need you to verify the information, even if it is all correct. You can use the freephone telephone number and key in your security codes using a touch-tone keypad, or you can use the internet or text to register your form, again using your security codes. Whilst these are the quickest and cheapest forms of registering, if you do not wish to use these services, you can simply sign and return the form to us using the pre-paid envelope provided.

INCORRECT DETAILS ON THE FORM

18. Old occupier’s details on form?
This may be for one of three reasons:-
   i. You may have informed the council tax office that you had moved in, but did not inform the electoral services office that you had moved in;
   
   ii. If you have already registered, we may not have been able to verify that the old occupants had vacated the property. We require two pieces of evidence to remove someone from the register under IER; we can't just assume that the other occupants have left, as they may be your relations and would not appreciate being removed from the Register, especially if you have only gone to stay with them on a temporary basis!
   
   iii. The previous occupants may have moved out but forgotten to let the electoral services office know their new address within the borough, or they may have registered in a new borough without inputting their previous address, so we would not receive notification from their new authority of their registration.

19. Pre-printed details are wrong?
You will need to cross out anything that is no longer valid and add any new information to the form. Please then sign it at the bottom of the front page and send it back to the council using the pre-paid envelope that we have provided for you.
20. **Can I forward the form?**
   No - The form is for that specific property and the new householder(s) should complete the details themselves. The people who used to live at that address will be getting their own form, which will be addressed to their new property.

21. **The address on the form is not written correctly?**
   Please amend the address box and when we receive the form, we shall investigate the changes and get back to you.

22. **I need to change my name on the register?**
   You will need to cross out your previous name and update the form with your new details; we will then send you a change of name evidence request – this could be due to a marriage certificate or deed poll. If you vote by post or proxy we will send you a new application to complete.

23. **A resident at the property has died?**
   Please note on the form that the elector is deceased and we shall update our records. A copy of the death certificate is not required.

**OPEN REGISTER**

24. **What is the open register?**
   Next to each entry on the HEF, you will see there is an indication as to whether the person listed is included on the open register. If you see “YES” in this column next to your name, then you are included on the open register. If you see “NO”, then you are opted out. In short, the open register is an edited extract of the Electoral Register which is available for general sale, and you can choose whether you are included or excluded from the open register. Opting out of the open register does not affect your voting rights or your credit score. Further information is printed on the reverse of the canvass form about the Full and Open versions of the Register.

25. **I have “opted out” before. Why is the box marked “YES”?**
   We have been advised that electors should make a fresh decision each year as to whether they wish to appear in the open register. If you wish, you can permanently opt-out of the open register. You will need to request a form from Electoral Services in order to do so.

26. **Is "opting out" the same as removing a name from the register?**
   No. To remove a person from the register, you must cross their name out. If you just change the status in the Open Register column against their entry, that means that the person stays on the register at the property, but will only appear on the Full Register which is used for voting purposes - in other words, they remain registered but have just "opted out".
27. Can I remove everybody in my household from the open register?
No. If you are the sole resident and you change your open register status, then we will amend it to your preferred option. If more than one person is resident at the property and it is indicated that they wish to make changes to their open register status, then we will contact those people individually to confirm that they wish to opt-out of the open register. If those electors do not confirm to us individually that they wish to be removed, then they will remain on both the open and full registers.

POSTAL AND PROXY VOTING

28. Does “POSTAL” mean I have a postal vote?
Yes. If it states “PROXY” in this column then we have received and accepted an application from you for somebody to vote on your behalf.

29. Can I cancel my absent vote?
Yes. If you would like to cancel your absent vote, just cross through the word POSTAL or PROXY on the form. If you are the sole resident and you indicate you would like to change your voting arrangements, then we will make that change for you. If multiple people would like to cancel their absent vote, then we will contact those people individually to confirm that they wish to cancel their absent votes.

30. Becoming a postal voter?
Just write “POSTAL” or “PROXY” in the column. We will need you to complete another form before we can grant you postal voting status and that is why you will be sent a separate postal voting application form.

ADDITIONS, DELETIONS AND MOVING

31. Relatives in hospital temporarily?
Anyone can sign the form to confirm that the details are still correct or need amending. Please fill in your contact details for us, so that we can get hold of you if we have any queries with the information provided.

32. Relatives gone into care?
Take the applicable name(s) off the registration form, sign it and return it to us for processing. All Nursing Homes will have received a registration form, and they are responsible for adding her name to their records. You may wish to contact us towards the end of the canvass period to check that we have had the details returned from the nursing home.

33. Children gone to university?
Many students remain registered at their parents’ house whilst they are away studying. This saves them having to register at their student accommodation. Many also apply for a postal vote and have their ballot

paper sent to their college address, or appoint someone back home to vote on their behalf at their usual polling station.

34. My son has joined the army?
Your son can remain on the register at your property as an "ordinary elector", or else he can register in his own right as a "service voter". Service declarations have to be renewed every five years.

35. I'm just a tenant?
The form is for the people living in that property. Just because someone else owns it, it is your responsibility as the occupier to complete the form and send it back to us for processing. Remember too, that if you are staying there for a short period, you should contact us again when you move, to make sure that your details are kept up-to-date on the Register.

36. I'm moving house soon?
The 2015 register is compiled and published based on where you are living as at 1 December 2015. If you are moving before 1 December, cross out your details but leave the form at the property for the new occupiers to complete and send in to us. Hopefully there will be a similar form left for you at the property that you are moving into. If not, please contact us and we can send you a replacement form for your new address instead. If you are moving after 1 December, complete the form as normal (or use the electronic registration options if there are no changes to make), but do remember to contact us again after you have moved, so that we can send you the forms to register at your new address.

37. We are going to live abroad?
It's best to contact the Electoral Services Office for exact advice, as it depends on whether you are already registered and when you are planning to leave. As a general rule of thumb, you can still vote in Parliamentary Elections for up to 15 years after leaving the UK, providing that you register as an "overseas elector".

38. I am going to be out of the country for the elections next year. Is there any way I can still vote?
You can arrange to appoint a proxy who will vote on your behalf, or you could apply for a postal vote. A postal vote can be sent to you overseas, but you should be aware that postal votes can be sent out as late as six working days before an election, so there may not be enough time for it to reach you, in time for you to complete and return it.

WHY?

39. You sent my form back?
If we do not understand something that you've put on your form, we may either contact you by telephone, e-mail or letter to obtain further details from you. Also, we do need the form to be signed, so in some cases we
will need to return it to you just to obtain the signature of one of the members of your household as being the "person responsible" for providing the information.

40. **What will happen if I don't fill in the form?**
The law requires you to give the information to the Electoral Registration Officer (Regulation 23 of the Representation of the People Regulations 2001). Any person failing to comply with or give false information could be fined up to £1,000.

41. **Why do you need my contact details?**
You don’t have to give us this information, but if we have a query during the canvass or in the run-up to an election, we may need to contact you urgently and this helps us to do so. We do not divulge these details to anyone else - they are purely for the use of the electoral services office, so please fill it in!

42. **Why do you need my nationality?**
Only people who are British, Irish, Commonwealth citizens or citizens of the European Union are eligible to go on the register. Depending on the type of election being contested, there are further restrictions on who is eligible to vote on the grounds of nationality - for example, European citizens cannot vote in UK Parliamentary Elections, but can vote in local elections.

43. **16 and 17 year olds?**
As soon as someone reaches their 18th birthday, they can vote in relevant elections from that day onwards, providing that they are on the Register of Electors. By putting those youngsters on the register with a date of birth, they will automatically become eligible to vote at the appropriate time, without having to make their own application to go on the register once they become 18.

44. **Why is my young child’s name on the form?**
All applications are taken at face value. The only information that we put on the register is that provided by members of the household. If the person who filled in the form at the last full canvass put their son/daughter's name on without a date of birth, we may have unwittingly added those details to the register. Please cross through their name, indicating that they are under 16 and send us the form back, and we will remove their details from the register.

45. **Why does my elector number change every year?**
Every time we publish a new Register of Electors, most people have a different elector number. Sometimes there are more people or less people on the register within your area, so the elector numbers need to be adjusted and may be slightly higher or lower than previously. They may alter significantly if there has been a boundary change in your area.
46. **Do I have to remember my elector number?**

No - the Officers on duty at the polling station will have lists of who is eligible to vote. You should also receive a poll card as a reminder shortly before any election in your area, which will state your elector number, polling station and the opening hours on the relevant day.

47. **Why do I have to tell both you and Council Tax of changes?**

Think of it in the same way as having a car - you need to get your car insured and you also need to get it taxed. You need both things, but have to get them from two different places. Here at the Borough Council of Wellingborough, the council tax office keeps records of the main householder who pays the bills, with perhaps a note of just their partner, husband or wife. The Electoral Registration Officer keeps a list of all eligible electors living at the property. It is a legal requirement that you should inform the Electoral Registration Officer who is living at your house.

**SECOND HOME AND BUSINESS PREMISES**

48. **The property in the borough is my second home?**

You should register to vote at your main address. If you will be away from your main residence during an election a postal vote can be sent to your new address. Alternatively you can appoint someone as a proxy to vote on your behalf. Still send the form back, but tick the box to say 'no eligible electors', stating that this is your second home and then sign.

49. **This is a business premises**

Such premises do sometimes convert back to residential properties - we appreciate your assistance in helping us to keep our records accurate. Please tick the box indicating the premises as a business and return the form in the pre-paid envelope provided.

50. **Business premises turned into residential?**

Simply complete all the relevant occupier details, then sign the form and return it to the electoral services office using the pre-paid envelope provided.

**SECURITY**

51. **I do not want my details to appear on the electoral register, as that will mean that I can be found which could put me and/or my family put in danger?**

There is a provision in law that enables people to register anonymously in certain circumstances. We can send you further information and an application form if you have a safe correspondence address (address the envelope to the occupier or just without name). Alternatively, you can pick up an information pack from our office.
52. Why has someone visited my house?
We are required by law to visit properties which have not responded to previous forms. We will send two forms to the property before we send a canvasser who will attempt to obtain the information. This only takes a few minutes on the doorstep.

INVITATIONS TO REGISTER

53. I’ve filled in the HEF – why have you sent me another form?
The Household Enquiry Form is not a registration form; it is sent to properties to obtain information. Under the IER system of registration, we are required to send Invitation to Register forms to anybody who is not confirmed under the IER system. The Invitation to Register form looks like this:

All new applications made are verified against central government records held at the Department for Work & Pensions, which is why we now ask you to provide your date of birth and National Insurance number on your application form.

54. I don’t have or don’t know my National Insurance number – am I still allowed to register?
Yes. Please return the form to us and tell us why you can’t include your National Insurance number. Returning the form to us will stop us sending any reminders or a canvasser to your doorstep to obtain the information
from you. We will then send you a request to provide documentary evidence so that we can verify your identity and complete your registration.

55. I sent you all my details, why am I being asked to provide ID?
All new applications are verified against central government records held at the Department for Work & Pensions. Most of the time they are come back as what we call a “green” match; any green applications will get a letter confirming that their application has been successfully processed and that they are now registered.
If DWP have not been able to match up the information provided on your application to their records, then we are required to send you a request to provide documentary evidence. This does not mean that you have done anything wrong; it could be that there was a digit wrong in the National Insurance number written on the form, or that you could not be matched as your name has changed. A list of acceptable evidence that can be used to verify your identity will be sent with the request. If you have any queries about this form then please do not hesitate to contact us.

56. I don’t have any of the identification you need to verify me – what happens next?
If you are unable to provide any of the identification we require, then we will send you a form which enables another member of the community to attest to your identity. This person must already be registered, and they must not be a direct relative or spouse or partner of yours. The attester must provide their electoral roll number when they make the attestation. If they do not know their electoral roll number then they can contact the electoral services office and it will be provided to them.